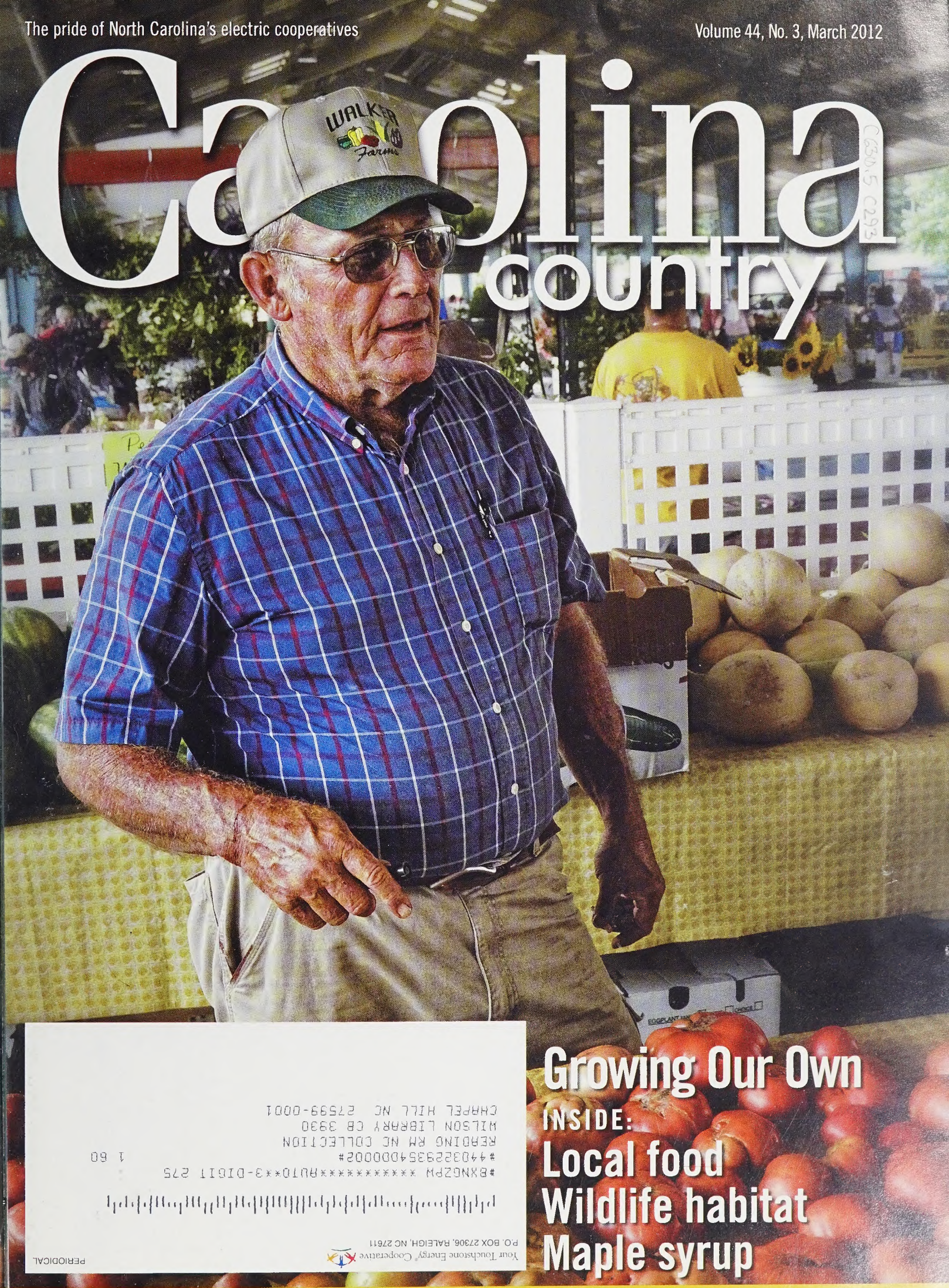
The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 44, No. 3, March 2012

Carolina country



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Growing Our Own

INSIDE:

Local food
Wildlife habitat
Maple syrup

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PERIODICAL

Do storm doors save energy?—page 48

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Bill Walker of Grays Chapel runs Walker Farms in Randolph County and regularly offers produce here at Piedmont Triad Farmer's Market in Greensboro. Learn about supporting local farmers on pages 18–19. (Dan Routh Photography)

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Supply, demand and government regulations

By Dale F. Lambert

America's electric utilities and governments are grappling with a supply-and-demand dilemma.

In spite of efforts that consumers and utilities have been making for years to use electricity more efficiently, the American lifestyle these days simply demands more electricity. Today's average residential electric bill for a year is $263.40 higher than it was in 2005. U.S. homes on average used an additional 50 kilowatt-hours every month between 2009 and 2010, and in that period retail electricity sales rose 4.4 percent.

On the supply side, the power plants that utilities built in the 1960s and 1970s—mostly coal and nuclear plants—now need expensive updated technology to meet efficiency, security and pollution control requirements. In some cases, it makes more sense economically to shut down the older plants.

New generating stations are scheduled to come online. The U..S. Department of Energy predicts 20,000 megawatts of natural gas facilities will start operating this year, with another 28,000 MW proposed for 2013. New wind project proposals may add 42,000 MW this year and 28,000 MW in 2013—but only if federal production tax credits continue.

Add to the mix a new series of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations that will require electric utilities to retrofit power plants with costly pollution control equipment. Utilities have been telling the federal government that the EPA timeline for these upgrades is unrealistic. Improvements take time, and new technologies have to be tested before going mainstream. EPA's strategy to require significant change within very compressed timelines could not only damage the American economy's recovery, but also could affect the reliability of your electric service.

There's no question that electric cooperatives want to do the right thing for the environment, and we have. Over the last decade, power supply co-ops have invested $3.4 billion to boost plant performance and limit emissions. In fact, since 1990, power plant emissions of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxides—compounds formed by burning fossil fuels—dropped at least 67 percent nationally even as electricity use climbed 38 percent. Another $4 billion has been slated for upgrades through 2021, with the bulk of the money—$2.18 billion—marked for work this year and next.

Currently about half of the nation's electricity comes from coal-fired plants. Many of the coal power plants that supply co-ops were built between 1975 and 1986, when using natural gas was prohibited by the federal Powerplant and Industrial Fuel Use Act.

Because we invested more in fossil-free nuclear energy during that time, North Carolina cooperatives are in a different position to manage the cost increases that stricter environmental regulations will bring. Understand, the regulations will increase electric bills for everyone. But due to our diverse fuel portfolio, we are potentially less impacted than other electric utilities. Even so, we have joined cooperatives around the nation in urging EPA to consider the impacts of its compressed timeframe. Rushing to implement serious upgrades will negatively affect our business mission: to safely provide you with reliable and affordable electricity. In order to keep your power flowing reliably, without forcing big rate hikes, utilities everywhere need a manageable timeframe to meet the EPA requirements.

Electric cooperatives are leading the way to find affordable solutions to America's electricity supply and demand dilemma. Find out how you can help at www.ourenergy.coop.

Dale F. Lambert is executive vice president and general manager of Randolph EMC, the Touchstone Energy cooperative that serves more than 31,000 members in Randolph,Montgomery, Moore and parts of Alamance and Chatham counties. He chairs the Power Supply Committee of the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation.

Recovery and connection

I relocated to Ashe County in the Creston, Pond Mountain area after a long decision to retire and fulfill one of my dreams, returning home to the High Country.

Upon reading Carolina Country in August 2010, I was pleasantly surprised to see that two western N.C. cooperatives were awarded a federal Recovery Act grant and loan to expand broadband Internet. In Ashe County, dial-up connections were the only type of Internet service for some. Even though DSL service was listed at the SkyLine Corporation in West Jefferson, I was at the end of the line and understood how costly it would be for SkyLine to expand there.

As I came around the mountain in my 1976 truck on Nov. 30, the day I retired, I saw a few fellows putting down line. I slowed down and asked what's going on. "Well," one of them said, "we are laying down line for new service with SkyLine that will include faster Internet, TV and other services."

You could have taken a pencil and drawn out my face with a smile and been right on target. What more could anyone ask for from Santa but the expansion of fiber-to-home services via fiber optic? The Recovery Act money was doing more than expand fiber, it helped create jobs and spur economic development in our area.

Thank to the taxpayers, to SkyLine, to those who helped get this project off the ground or under the ground, so to speak, and to Carolina Country. I hope to see rural entrepreneurism in Ashe County. I am working on a new website for my articles, novels and poetry.

Dr. Marilyn R. Lee, Creston, Blue Ridge Electric

Heartwarming

Roasting marshmallows on what is considered a warm night for a winter in eastern North Carolina. These are the moments I will forever cherish as a mother. I hope my kids hold these moments as dear in their hearts growing up as I do.

J. Swindell, Engelhard, Tideland EMC

Downy

This downy woodpecker is a new friend outside my home office in Stallings.

Scott Hill, Memphis, Tenn.

Saving energy?

Your editorial about the 100-watt light bulb in February's Carolina Country got me to thinking. In 32 years, "government-enacted standards regulating vehicle fuel efficiency....and since 1980, the U.S. Big Three automakers have increased their fleet's average fuel efficiency by 4.1 miles per gallon, according to federal statistics." So 4.1 mpg in 32 years results in a whopping savings of 1/8 mile per gallon per year. Possibly foreign makers' kicking the Big Three's butt motivated them more than our government.

Are any problems really solved by Congress or the President? What results by giving taxpayers' dollars to losing corporations trying to be green? Payoffs to donors maybe? By comparison your light bulb savings to individuals is miniscule, eaten up by increased taxes now and decades later.

Gary Wilt, Huntersville, EnergyUnited

Watts are power

Randolph Lambe, a physicist, Orange County resident and member of Piedmont EMC, kindly pointed out that the chart comparing light bulb strength that we ran in February's "First Person" labeled watts as energy. "Watts are not energy," he said. "Watts are power. Energy is power times time, like watt-hours or kilowatt-hours; that's energy. Watts is the rate of energy flow, and it's measured in watt-hours or kilowatt-hours. Not that anyone really cares, except old physicists."

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JACOB'S LOG:

The value of a country life

By Jacob Brooks

I suppose it is tough for some to grasp the meaning of rural life. I've noticed several of my friends in Boone seem stupefied when I mention that the nearest WalMart to my home in Alleghany County is around a 30-minute drive away. They seem to be shocked when I note the closest mall is more like 90 minutes away. Often, they respond with, "I don't think I could live like that," or "Aren't you bored all the time?"

Granted, there are not as many activities in the boondocks as there are in the city, but country life is not all that bad.

First of all, I will admit that at a young age I promised myself I would leave rural North Carolina when the opportunity presented itself. I anticipated relocating to a bright lights, big city. I yearned for the adventure and excitement associated with a city. Frankly, I was fed up with the boredom that comes from living far out in the country. I remember constantly complaining to my mother and father: "I'm bored. There isn't anything to do." I loathed living in what I thought to be such a dreary, monotonous area. Following a slow tractor every other day while driving on my way home irritated me to no ever-loving end.

Now that I live in the small city of Boone, I've come to realize my time spent out in the middle of nowhere was well worth it.

One of my favorite childhood memories is when Dad took my brother Josh and me out to the little country store, Guynn's, to get an orange Nehi. Guynn's, in my opinion, is one of those treasures of rural America: a little gas station and store tucked off the side of the road. The old gas pumps without the credit card slot or computer are still there to this day. I can remember riding out to the store with Mama for milk and bread. Guynn and the gang would be in the back playing Rook. I'm sure y'all have an old country store of your own, or at least the memory of one.

Apart from my nostalgic memories, I believe there is a value to the simple way of life in rural America that is clearly getting lost today. A sense of honor, loyalty, hard work, respect and community are ever-present in rural places. I was taught the importance of lending a hand when needed. My father used to clear our neighbors' snow-covered driveways, and many of our neighbors assisted my family when needed. I expect I will never lose the values and morals I learned from living with the people of rural Alleghany County.

While working with the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., I noticed how people complimented the manners and character of the kids on the tour. The staff at the hotel claimed never to have seen young people act in such a respectful manner. All of these kids were from rural areas across America, a testament to the rural American way of life.

I can remember driving I-40 East heading to Wilmington not long ago. While passing through Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Raleigh and all the rest of strip-mall America, I began to notice how homogenous those areas have become. It seems like every town is simply a continuation of the other, all looking the same. You see the same two dozen department stores and two dozen restaurants almost anywhere you go. If it weren't for certain unique geographical structures, everywhere would seem the same.

This is not the case for rural America. It is refreshing to live in a place that doesn't look and feel the same as any other town. Maybe it's not so bad getting stuck behind a tractor every now and then. It gives you time to think and appreciate where you are.

Jacob Brooks served as the electric cooperatives' Youth Leadership Council national spokesman in 2010 and remains active in the annual Youth Tour. He attends Appalachian State University.

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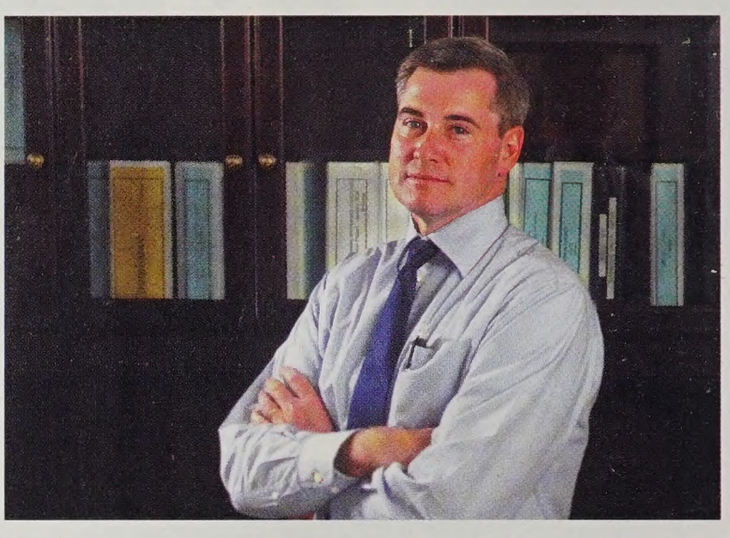
Joe Brannan is the new CEO for NCEMC power supply corporation

North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation's board of directors has named Joseph P. "Joe" Brannan to the position of chief executive officer of the organization and affiliated companies, headquartered in Raleigh. He will succeed Richard K. "Rick" Thomas, who has led the company since 2006 and will retire at the end of April.

NCEMC board president Donnie Spivey said, "Rick Thomas has served the membership of the electric cooperatives with great distinction and has prepared staff for a successful transition. Joe possesses the knowledge and talent to continue to move this company forward in order to meet the energy needs of our members. We look forward to working with him in his new position as we strive to meet future challenges in today's demanding business climate."



Since 2006, Brannan has been senior vice president of power supply and chief operating officer of NCEMC, the power supply cooperative for most of North Carolina's electric cooperatives. After his appointment as CEO, he said, "I am honored to be selected for the position and excited to face the challenges ahead in the electric utility industry. I appreciate and am grateful to be given the opportunity to build upon the successes achieved at NCEMC under Rick Thomas' leadership. I believe that my more than two decades of utility and industry experience have prepared me to serve the member-owned cooperatives of North Carolina."

Thomas, the departing CEO, said, "I very much appreciated the opportunity to lead the North Carolina statewide cooperatives for the past six years. During that time, we have, through NCEMC, developed a power supply strategy that can help to mitigate cost increases in the industry-wide rising cost environment. In addition, through NCAEC, we have improved many trade association services and other related services of value to our member cooperatives. These efforts are the keystone to providing long-term affordable and reliable power to our members throughout North Carolina."

Throughout his career in the electric utility and energy industry, Brannan has worked in various areas of utility operations and management, risk management, energy trading and marketing operations. Prior to joining NCEMC, he held management positions at ACES Power Marketing (APM), PPL Corporation and its energy marketing affiliates. Brannan holds a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Business Administration from Lehigh University.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide energy to 2.5 million people in 93 of the state's 100 counties, primarily in the rural areas of the state. The electric cooperatives own and maintain 97,000 miles of power lines, the most of any electric utility in North Carolina.

Space heaters should be used sparingly and can be costly

On cold days and nights, you might be tempted to plug in an electric space heater. Electric heaters are 100 percent efficient, but you need to understand how best to use them and how they might affect your electric bill. Space heaters are designed for temporary use, not long-term, and are most effective in a small space, such as a workshop.

Electric Space Heater Usage & Costs*

Heat Setting (watts)	Daily Hours of Operation							
	1	2	4	6	8	10	12	24
600	$0.06	$0.12	$0.23	$0.35	$0.46	$0.58	$0.69	$1.39
750	$0.07	$0.14	$0.29	$0.43	$0.58	$0.72	$0.87	$1.73
900	$0.09	$0.17	$0.35	$0.52	$0.69	$0.87	$1.04	$2.08
1350	$0.13	$0.26	$0.52	$0.78	$1.04	$1.30	$1.56	$3.12
1500	$0.14	$0.29	$0.58	$0.87	$1.16	$1.44	$1.73	$3.47

Heat Setting	Cost/Week	Cost/Month
600	$ 9.71	$ 41.60
750	$12.13	$ 52.00
900	$14.56	$ 62.40
1350	$21.84	$ 93.60
1500	$24.27	$104.00

When selecting a space heater, remember that a $50 "big box store" heater performs as well as a $400 nationally advertised model of the same wattage. Be wary of ads featuring "special" electric technology; a watt is a watt.

Also be sure to buy a unit with a tip-over switch so it turns off if it falls or is knocked over. Always turn off the heater when you leave the room.

Note: If the heater also has a fan, the actual cost may be more than the amounts shown.

*Based on 9.63 cents per kWh.

Carteret-Craven Electric

Different space heaters (radiant, infrared, convection) of the same wattage cost the same to operate if used for the same periods of time. At an electric rate of 9.63 cents per kilowatt-hour, a 1,500-watt heater will cost 14 cents to run for one continuous hour. If the heater runs for 24 hours it will add $3.47 to your bill. If it runs for 24 hours for 30 days, it will add $104.10.

Space heaters on the market can cost $50 to $500. They are available locally as well as through unknown sources, including the Internet or door-to-door sales. Know what you are buying, who you are buying it from, how you are going to use it and what your cost will be.

Allow your electric cooperative to work for you. Ask for a home energy audit and implement the suggested improvements. Spending $50 on caulk may go further towards saving money than a new $50 heater. Spending $500 to replace two ancient windows or improve your attic insulation may have greater payback than a $500 space heater with additional monthly costs.

Try This!

Create a mini-sunroom with a bay window

By James Dulley

Old, large single-pane picture windows, which were common in houses built many years ago, are extremely inefficient. Not only is there a huge heat loss (and gain, in summer) through the glass itself, but there likely is no insulation around it inside the walls. If one faces south or west, count on the drapes, furniture and carpeting near it to be badly faded.

A bow or bay window, sometimes called the "poor man's sunroom," can be an attractive replacement. A bow or bay window can provide some of the benefits of a sunroom at a lower cost. These include making your room appear larger, providing a seat at the window, and creating an ideal location for plants. Even though it costs considerably less than adding a small sunroom, installing an efficient bow or bay window is still not an inexpensive home-improvement project.

No matter what type of new window design you install, it will be more efficient than an old picture window and reduce your utility bills. This savings can help to pay back its initial cost, but it will take many years to pay back the entire cost. By including the utility bills savings with the increase in your home's resale value, you should be able to recover most of the cost over a reasonable time period.

This bay window includes double-hung windows on each side. Notice the decorative grille that lines up with the double-hung sash line.

The basic difference between a bow and a bay window is a bow window is made of four or more narrow window panels, often of the same width. Five windows is the most common configuration. Using more window panels creates a more circular appearance. Often, only the two end windows can be opened but you can order them so they all open.

Bay windows are made from just three window panels. The two angled side panels usually can be opened and are angled at either 30 or 45 degrees. The fixed center window is similar to a smaller picture window with an unobstructed view of the outdoors. A 45-degree bay window extends further than a 30-degree window from the house wall and provides more space for plants or a bench seat. It creates more of a mini-sunroom feel.

There is not a significant difference in the energy efficiency or durability of a bow or bay window. A bay window may be slightly more efficient because there are fewer joints and seams to be sealed. Also, wherever there is framing material and supporting lumber in the wall, there is less room for insulation.

Select the most energy-efficient glass your budget will allow. At the very minimum, select double-pane glass with a low-emissivity coating and inert gas in the gap between the panes. Make sure to select the proper glass for your area because the location of the low-emissivity coating can vary depending upon your climate. All the new glass types will reduce fading.

Because a bow or bay window protrudes from the wall, it is ideal for natural ventilation during summer to reduce your air-conditioning costs. Look for a bow or bay window that has insulation, often foam, in the seatboard and the top. This saves energy and improves your comfort near the window. Your plants will also appreciate it during winter.

Unless you are very handy with tools, it is generally better to purchase an entire unit designed as a bow or bay window. This will cost a little more than assembling one from individual windows, but it will likely be stronger and more airtight.

James Dulley is an engineer and syndicated columnist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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Energy saving strategies for stay-at-home parents

by Stephanie Janard

No doubt about it, I'm blessed to have a career that allows me to stay home with my 4-year-old son, Sage. On the other hand, we have the energy bill to prove it. For years, I've gone about our daily domestic routines with little thought to how much energy I use in the process, compared to households where parents work outside the home and their children are in daycare.

But one day, on a whim, I looked up the national average for most residential energy usage—about 800 kilowatt-hours a month. Our own household? A whopping 1800 kwh! It was time to implement some meaningful changes in our home, starting with…

- **Spending more time away.** While my first instinct was to turn off the thermostat and the lights, on second thought, I really didn't want our son to remember a childhood spent huddling in a dark house with a miserly mother. There's a much better alternative: spend it at the library! You'll be surprised how quickly the time goes by reading through a satisfying stack of books with your child, playing games, or working out a puzzle together.

- **Rotating play dates within a circle of friends** can also get you and your child out of the house several days a week. On sunny days, meet up at a nearby playground; in summer, swim at a local pool if your town has one. Or just set up a wading pool in the backyard and have a potluck picnic.

- **Getting off the computer.** Let's face it, many of us stay-at-homes are on it more than we dare to admit. But not only is this machine a greedy energy user, it uses up attention better spent on our child. Same goes for the TV, so replace both with some good old-fashioned play. I've weaned my son (and myself) off of morning TV by organizing a little area I call his "art station." This gets us busy with play dough, crayons and just being a little more creative in the morning instead of zoning out in front of Sponge Bob or Dora.

Rather than turning to the TV or computer, set up an art station to encourage creativity and save energy.

Sage and me at home on our back steps.

- **Getting out of the kitchen.** The more I'm at home, the more I cook. And as the mother of a picky eater, I'm usually cooking for one. Yet my child is perfectly happy with daytime meals like cereal for breakfast, a sandwich at lunch and light snacks that don't require energy intensive stovetop use. These days, so am I.

- **Making energy conservation fun.** If you already keep a reward chart for your child with gold stars for making up his bed, setting the table and other chores, why not add "remembering to turn off lights" to the list?

Of course, your own reward for trying some of the above strategies won't just be a lower electric bill. As the quantity of energy you use shrinks, the quality of time you spend with your child is almost sure to increase.

Stephanie Janard lives in Rutherford County and operates a writing business and blog at www.betterb2bcopy.com.

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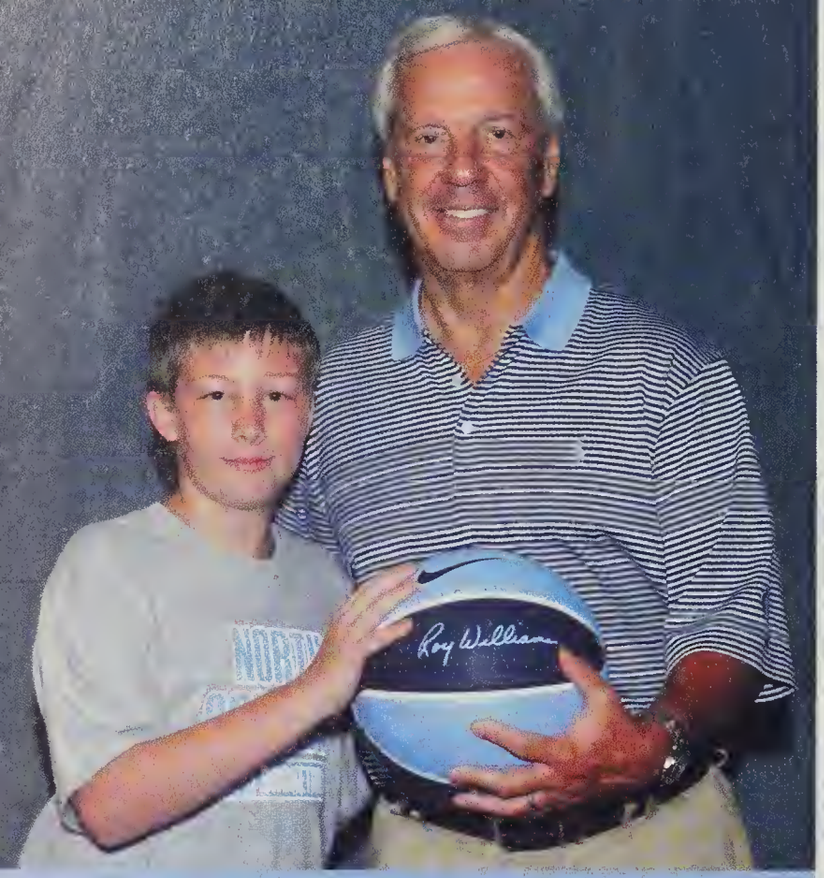

UNC basketball coach Roy Williams was "a teacher, leader and inspiration" to John Tyler Richmond.

NEW HOPE, NEW VISION

How an experience at basketball camp opened new avenues for John Tyler Richmond

By Kelly Reiser

John Tyler Richmond, a 14-year-old from Autryville, has always loved basketball. A birth defect prevented him from speaking clearly, but after he went through reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation, the first word he spoke was "ball."

On a court since age 3, John was taught by his mother, Crystal Richmond, and grandfather, Billy Autry, who are still his biggest fans. He lives and breathes basketball.

His passion prompted John to apply for a Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarship to attend the Roy Williams Carolina Basketball Camp in 2009. In his application, John described the importance of working as a team, and how basketball, to him, is about nonstop work, love of the game, respect, continuous learning and overcoming obstacles.

"When we read John's application we knew immediately that he was the candidate we wanted to have represent our cooperative," said Catherine O'Dell, manager of member and public affairs at South River EMC. "His enthusiasm before the camp was admirable, but his passion for life now is inspiring."

As a shooting guard, John spent four days shooting, dribbling, blocking and running drills at the camp on the University of North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill, sponsored by South River EMC. He experienced life on a college campus and worked directly with UNC players and head coach Roy Williams, who John called a teacher, leader and inspiration.

John's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Billy Autry, say he returned home from camp a changed man. Before, they said, he wasn't driven toward a higher level of education. Now he has gained new-found motivation to excel in school and aims to return to UNC-Chapel Hill as a college student when he graduates from Midway High School in a few years. John's dream is to play college ball and ultimately, he hopes, to play in the NBA for his favorite team, the Boston Celtics.

At camp he also developed fundamental skills that have helped him both on and off the court. "Going to the camp helped him to work with a team and become more confident," says John's mother.

John learned more than just basketball skills at camp. While doing drills and playing in the camp tournament, he found a new determination to play harder and expand his knowledge. He learned the value of a college education and aspires to one day major in business.

Now a freshman in high school, John plays on a travel basketball league and spends his weekends with friends and family. He also enjoys outdoor activities, baseball and lacrosse, video games, playing the electric guitar and drawing. He's working hard to become an Eagle Scout, and he continues to benefit from the sense of determination and inspiration that a Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarship helped him discover.

Kelly Reiser is an intern with the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives. She attends North Carolina State University and expects to graduate in May with degrees in communication and international studies.

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Foreclosure prevention loans help hard-hit families keep their homes

A zero-interest loan can help pay your mortgage while you look for work

By Connie Helmlinger

With the state's unemployment rate topping the national average, a new foreclosure prevention loan program is helping North Carolina homeowners who have lost their jobs in the downturn.

N.C. Housing Finance Agency executive director Bob Kucab (left) and Congressman Brad Miller discussed the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund with a North Carolina homeowner who is using the program to save her home while she seeks employment.

Launched at the end of 2010, the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund helps unemployed homeowners pay their mortgages while they get back on their feet. In its first year, it has helped more than 3,600 North Carolinians save their homes, and is adding new clients at the rate of 500 a month. The effort is expected to assist 21,000 North Carolina families before it ends in 2017.

Administered by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency, the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund pays the mortgage for unemployed workers while they seek jobs or complete job training in a new field. Other homeowners, who have gotten behind on their payments because of divorce, illness or other temporary hardship, may also qualify while they look for work.

"The goal is to help responsible homeowners who are struggling through no fault of their own, to protect their homes while they seek new employment," says A. Robert Kucab, executive director of the N.C. Housing Finance Agency. "Every foreclosure we can prevent helps the state's economic recovery by protecting property values and the local tax base."

The N.C. Housing Finance Agency, a self-supporting public agency, has financed 201,000 homes and apartments in the last three decades, including 84,000 homes for first-time home buyers. It is guided by a 13-member board of directors, including Dean Carpenter of Dallas, who is president of the Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation.

North Carolina was one of 18 states and the District of Columbia chosen by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to participate in its "Hardest Hit" Fund because of high unemployment rates or falling home prices. "We had a head start," says Kucab, "because we were already operating a small, state-funded foreclosure prevention loan program that could provide the foundation of the new effort. We'd already built important partnerships with local housing counseling agencies, and we knew where many of the pot holes would be."

The North Carolina proposal became the model for many of the other "Hardest Hit" states.

Eligible homeowners (see "You May Be Eligible") apply for the program through one of 40 participating HUD-approved counseling agencies

statewide or can apply online at www.NCForeclosurePrevention.gov. For homeowners who qualify, the housing agency makes monthly payments for mortgage, taxes, insurance and even homeowners dues, up to $36,000 or 36 months, directly to loan servicers. Afterward, the owners resume making their own mortgage payments. The help is provided as a zero-interest, deferred loan. If the owner continues to live in the home for at least 10 years, the loan is considered satisfied and no repayment is required.

Sherry Long, community development director at Western Piedmont Council of Governments in Hickory, has met many of the families her organization has helped apply for the loans. She says sometimes the assistance is brief, as in the case of single father in Alexander County who was unemployed for nine months. Even after he found a job that would enable him to pay his mortgage, he was in danger of losing his home because of past-due payments and fees. He qualified for a reinstatement loan from the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund and kept his home.

Long says that, in the process of helping individuals, the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund is helping local governments in her area by making sure property taxes are paid.

"We've been able to sustain property values in many areas by preventing the foreclosures that would bring them down," Long notes. "We also see the benefit to local businesses—people are able to continue paying their power bills, pay for the kids' school lunches and make the car payments that enable them to search for a new job."

Long's organization serves Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. She says her area has been particularly hard-hit, losing jobs—mostly in the furniture, textile and fiber optic industries—well before the rest of the state.

"We are back to the same employment numbers as 1990," she says. "We have lost 20 years of economic growth as a result of the recession, with not one new net job since then."

A self-employed man is another of Long's success stories. The owner of a cleaning service that specializes in physicians' offices, he saw his income cut in half when the recession hit and the doctors' office staffs began doing their own cleaning. A loan from the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund is saving his home while he builds his business back by adding new clientele and offering new services.

Another is a Catawba County teacher's assistant and her construction-worker husband. The wife lost her job at the same time her husband had his income drastically reduced. They were close to losing their home when they came to Western Piedmont for help. The wife qualified for 36 months of mortgage payments from the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund while she earns a teaching degree.

"We definitely see a lot of people trying to retrain for new jobs in this area," says Long, who notes that the parking lot at the community college is always full. "This program is a great way to protect a family's home and the property values in their neighborhood while they get back on their feet."

The N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund also offers loans to pay off second mortgages for homeowners who have found new jobs but are still unable to make their monthly mortgage payments because of reduced income. Paying off the second mortgage often reduces the homeowner's total monthly payments to a level they can afford. The assistance is a zero-interest, deferred payment loan of up to $30,000, plus all related fees.

Borrowers must have a good mortgage payment history for six months prior to the initial job loss or hardship. The loan is only paid back when the homeowner sells or refinances the home.

Homeowners do not need to be behind on their mortgage payments to apply for assistance. For more information about their eligibility, homeowners should call a participating counseling agency or the toll-free information line, (888) 623-8631, or go to www.ncforeclosureprevention.gov.

Connie Helmlinger is a senior communication specialist with the N.C. Housing Finance Agency.

Laurie Powell, community development administrator at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments in Hickory, closes a foreclosure prevention fund loan.

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Farm Fresh

THE ADVANTAGES OF BUYING LOCAL FOODS

By Amy Ney

A visit to the grocery store can be rather overwhelming these days. Prices continue to rise and new food products regularly appear on the shelves. But just because it's in your local grocery store, doesn't mean it's local, it's food, or that it's good for you. Fruits and vegetables may be picked green and shipped for miles, and the nutritional content decreases as they travel and sit on the store shelf. Additionally, many food products are highly processed and contain modified ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated soybean oil, salts, colors and other chemicals.

Pigeon Valley Farms, Haywood County.

Dawn Cox, who directs Pigeon Valley Farms, Haywood County, shared that local tomatoes sent to the local packinghouse in western North Carolina had emerged in boxes labeled "Florida Tomatoes," intended to be shipped to and sold in the Sunshine State. So just because a fruit or vegetable is marketed in the grocery store as being from your location, that doesn't mean it actually is. (For more on these topics, see Michael Pollan's books "In Defense of Food" and "The Omnivore's Dilemma.")

Buying produce directly from a local farmer during the growing season avoids many of these grocery store pitfalls and allows you to ask questions about when it was picked, how it was grown, and even what types of fertilizers were used. Buying from a local grower avoids the mystery, helps promote the local economy, protect the environment, support rural heritage and so much more.

Because of the shorter distance between producer and consumer, local foods are fresher, taste better and have more nutritional value. Eating seasonal produce encourages a varied menu throughout the year and the inclusion of more fruits and vegetables. It also encourages a healthy diet for the residents of North Carolina, which has the 12th highest adult obesity rate in the nation.

Local food purchases also promote the local economy and help protect local farms. According to the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, North Carolinians spend an estimated $35 billion per year on food purchases. If just 10 percent of that was spent locally, an estimated $3.5 billion would be directed into local economies. And in a time when farmland is rapidly being swallowed up by residential developments, it is especially important to support our local farmers and provide jobs in the farming community.

It takes less fuel and creates less carbon emissions to transport foods to local markets, additionally helping to preserve our environment and natural resources. It also encourages farming practices that benefit human, animal and environmental health. Small farmers are more likely to pasture-raise their animals in humane conditions and use techniques that help promote natural soil fertility than are larger farming corporations.

Farming is a family tradition and way of life that is passed on from generation to generation. Supporting local farmers ensures that the knowledge, tools and skills that are part of this rural heritage will continue on and guarantees a sustainable local food system for future generations.

At a local farm, you know what you're getting, or at least you can ask.

How to eat fresh

Obtaining local food is fairly simple. Beyond the method closest to home—growing your own—a little searching online, or asking around the community, can provide a bountiful harvest of options. Whatever method you choose, you'll be helping to support the local farming community. This strengthens the connection between the producer and the consumer and helps all of us, including our children, remember that food comes from the farm, not the grocery store.

NC Farm Fresh (www.ncfarmfresh.com/farms.asp) can help you locate a market, a pick-your-own farm, a CSA (see below), or even a specific fruit, vegetable or product.

Eatwild (www.eatwild.com) will help you locate pasture-raised livestock and poultry. If you live in western North Carolina, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project annually provides their in-depth Local Food Guide in both a print and online version (www.asapconnections.org/localfoodguide.html). Wherever you purchase, be sure to ask if the product was grown nearby—when local items are not available, they can be trucked in from miles away, just as in the grocery store.

Consumer-Supported Agriculture involves purchasing a farm share in advance and then receiving a portion of the in-season produce each week. If you are dedicated to eating more vegetables and to helping a local farmer, you can join a CSA. Farms vary in the types of produce available and in the amount you'd like to invest. As always with farming, there's a risk of losing a crop and not getting exactly what you expected, so flexibility is recommended.

Two great resources to help you eat seasonal local food are two cookbooks: "Simply in Season," published by Herald Press, gives a wealth of seasonal recipes for fruits, vegetables, and herbs, each indexed separately for ease of access. "From Asparagus to Zucchini," published by the Madison Area CSA Coalition, is organized by vegetable or herb, with related recipes grouped together.

Amy Ney is a freelance writer in Canton and a member of Haywood EMC.

My husband and I pick up our weekly CSA produce.

Bees, Birds & Other Beasts

HOW TO MAKE YOUR YARD ATTRACTIVE TO WILDLIFE

By Amy Ney

Blooming trees, shrubs and flowers begin filling home improvement stores and garden centers in early spring. And North Carolinians respond to the appeal by purchasing and planting these showy plants. But how do you know what to plant and when you should really plant it? How do you choose the right tree or shrub? Which flowers are best for your site?

Butterflies and bees require a plethora of flowering, nectar-producing plants.

Instead of starting your landscaping project at your local garden center, you might start in your backyard instead. North Carolina's rapidly increasing population is causing a decreasing amount of available wildlife habitat. Plants in your backyard can easily be aesthetically pleasing and at the same time help local wildlife.

All wildlife require food, water and shelter; the first step is to discover the specific needs of the wildlife species that you would like to attract.

Songbirds thrive in a variety of plant layers (trees, shrubs and groundcover) and feed on plants that provide fruit and seeds throughout the year. Evergreens such as American holly provide cover in every season, while deciduous trees may provide cover as well as food during the warmer months. Natural sources may be supplemented with bird feeders, houses and baths, but take care to avoid placing these where predators such as snakes and cats can find an easy meal.

Hummingbirds tend to migrate south in the winter, but they can be attracted during the warmer months with a variety of plants that provide nectar, especially those with tubular flowers such as trumpet vine and red buckeye.

Butterflies require a variety of caterpillar host plants (monarch caterpillars only eat milkweed leaves) as well as nectar plants with flowers of varying sizes, depths, and bloom times. Butterflies like sunny areas, and males need small puddles that aid in reproduction.

Turkeys like large areas of winter, nesting and brood range habitat with mature hardwood forest, open understory and water sources.

Squirrels prefer trees with hard nuts or fruits and den holes and can utilize dew and plant material as a water source.

As you plan, carefully consider the needs of the animals you would like to attract as well as their compatibility with people and other animals. It is not smart or safe to feed or otherwise attract bears or other predators to human habitat.

Draft a plan

The second step in creating your backyard habitat is to diagram your site and existing vegetation. This could range from an actual base map drawn to scale to a rough sketch of your land. It is recommended that you record what wildlife uses your property over an entire year and note what plants are producing flowers, fruit and seeds in different

Layering evergreen shrubs beneath deciduous trees.

Hollies provide winter roosting and food.

seasons. Based on what animals you would like to attract, and what habitat requirements are lacking in your yard, you can choose plants to fill in the gaps. You might also add water features, benches and other items to increase aesthetics and aid in viewing wildlife.

Next, draft a plan for planting and installation. As you create your plant list, be sure to select a variety of native plants. (Nonnatives usually have less wildlife value, require more care, and may impinge on the growing space and needs of surrounding native plants.) Consider the shape, growth form, colors and textures of plants. Make sure each has adequate space to grow to maturity, both in height and diameter. Canopy trees will be focal points with shrub and groundcover layers underneath. Also take into account the moisture, light, region and soil preferences of the plants you choose. You might even consider replacing all or part of your lawn with plants easier to care for and more beneficial to wildlife.

Lastly, you'll want to actually purchase and place your chosen items. This can be completed in stages over time—it does not have to be done all at once! Follow proper planting guidelines by digging a large enough hole, replacing the original soil and giving the appropriate amount of water. Because North Carolina summers may be very hot, most native plants fare better if planted in the fall.

Designing a backyard habitat may seem overwhelming, but not if you consider it a work in progress. There are numerous resources to help you, including your local Cooperative Extension agents and nursery owners. (Be sure to always ask for natives, as many nurseries sell known exotic invasive plants.) Free extension publications such as "Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants" (AG-636-03) and the Going Native website (www.ncsu.edu/goingnative) can help you choose plants beneficial to you and wildlife. The National Wildlife Foundation (www.nwf.org) will even certify your backyard habitat if it provides all the habitat essentials. So be creative, have fun, and get planting!

Amy Ney is a writer with a background in private land management. She is a member of Haywood EMC and lives in Canton.

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Farm Marketing Co-ops

HOW CO-OPS USE THE INTERNET TO SPREAD FRESH FOOD TO CITIES AND WEALTH TO FARMING COMMUNITIES

Story and photo by Hannah Miller

Five farmers' marketing co-ops in North Carolina are now using the Internet to make lucrative connections with big-city chefs, employees of large businesses and enthusiastic home cooks who don't mind paying premium prices. Last year, they brought more than $200,000 into their rural counties.

A Piedmont Local Food-packed box is "like jewelry," says Jeremy Tyson.

Josh Heinberg, executive director of Down East Connect co-op, says money flows from Wilmington, its biggest market, to farms in Columbus, Bladen, Brunswick and Robeson counties.

Farmers set their individual prices, which can be $7.50 a pound for grass-fed, extra-low-fat ground beef, and $4.50 a dozen for brown, Grade A Jumbo eggs. "We encourage our farmers to know where their price needs to be (to cover costs)," says Brenda Sutton, a founder of Wentworth-based Piedmont Local Food.

The markets mimic Rutherfordton-based Farmers Fresh Market, established in 2006, and most can still be accessed through that group's website, www.farmersfreshmarket.org. Piedmont uses www.piedmontlocalfood.com.

Customers order from sophisticated Internet presentations of sustainably-grown, mostly chemical-free food including exotic variations—like purple okra—as well as the staples of meat, dairy and produce. The markets' trucks deliver within two days.

The Rutherfordton market includes about 100 farmers from Rutherford, Polk, Cleveland, Buncombe and McDowell counties. They sell to some 20 restaurants and wholesalers and more than 500 individuals in buying clubs in Charlotte and Greenville, S.C.

Erin Brighton of Charlotte, an enthusiastic home cook, cooking blogger, health teacher and mother of four, describes delivery day at her home, a pickup point for 50 friends. She has "crate upon crate" in her dining room, and "depending on how much food there is, in my front hall. There's like a pile of money on the table. My 1-year old is trying to throw eggs. It's crazy."

But, she says, from an economic and health perspective, "I love what we do."

At Piedmont Local Food, 75 farmers from Rockingham, Caswell, Stokes, Guilford, Forsyth and Alamance counties bring food to a borrowed warehouse, where volunteers pop the ground beef in a freezer and sort the produce for delivery to about 600 customers in Winston-Salem, Greensboro, High Point and other towns.

Businesses let employees order and accept deliveries during the workday because "they're trying to help their employees eat healthier," says Brenda Sutton.

Deborah Crumpton of Running Pine Herb Farm, an EnergyUnited member from Wentworth, says, "We've sold probably more fresh-cut on there (the website) than we do at the farmers market. Surprising."

The 20 growers of Down East Connect, which started with the help of a $2,500 grant from Brunswick EMC, sell in Wilmington, Whiteville and Brunswick County.

Down East, at www.downeastconnect.com, has also formed an alliance with Eastern Carolina Food Ventures, www.farmersfreshmarket.org/easternfoodventures, supplying leafy greens and receiving granola and pork. Eastern Carolina, allied with James Sprunt Community College and including 40 producers in Duplin, Pender, Lenoir and Sampson counties, sells to buying clubs in Duplin and Pender and intends to expand to Lenoir and Sampson.

Hannah Miller is a Carolina Country contributing writer who lives in Charlotte.

Sap's Rising

NORTH CAROLINA MAPLE SYRUP MAKERS TAP A NICHE MARKET

By Carla Burgess

Doug Munroe will never forget the winter day in 1976 that he scoped out the Ashe County farm where he now lives. Walking the snow-covered landscape with the owner, he was consumed by the stunning mountain vistas. The property had a 40-foot waterfall. Tulip poplars and sugar maples covered the steep slopes. He knew he was home.

Maple Creek Farm

Richard Sanders uses a hydrometer to check the specific gravity of syrup in the evaporator at Maple Creek Farm.

Munroe had no inkling then that he'd one day tap his sugar maples to make syrup. But over time, he gradually thinned around the maples. Meantime, he raised Christmas trees and truck crops for the local market, started a nursery and worked as a landscaper. It was 2005 before he tapped the first sugar maple.

For a few years he made small batches of syrup, collecting and hauling the sap by the bucket to his back yard where he boiled it in pans over a wood fire. Munroe now relies on a sophisticated gravity-fed system to collect sap. Some 250 taps connect to tubes and pipes, about a mile in all. The sap flows downhill to the "sugar shack" that he built of his own tulip poplar and locust. Last year, a $9,700 grant from the Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund allowed him to buy a commercial evaporator three storage tanks and a filtering box. He sells syrup in 8-ounce and 12-ounce bottles under the brand Waterfall Farm.

Munroe is entering a business primarily associated with New England and eastern Canada. The northwestern North Carolina mountains are the southernmost native range of the sugar maple. The sparseness of the trees here, along with a steep terrain that makes collecting by hand impractical, has limited the potential for large-scale production.

About 80 miles southwest of Munroe's farm, another North Carolina maple syrup maker is also tapping the market. John Swann of Maple Creek Farm in Yancey County has scads of sugar maples in about 85 acres of woods. He started tapping the trees five years ago. Like Munroe, he invested in a gravity-fed system, with about three miles of line so far. He has 500 taps in 400 trees. The best run he's had in a season is about 100 gallons of syrup, the worst about 20. At a retail price of $168 per gallon, Swann says his break-even point is about 30 gallons a year. It takes 45 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup. It takes up to 30 years for a tree to grow big enough for tapping—10 to 12 inches in diameter.

An ample harvest depends on a relatively short period of rapidly fluctuating temperatures. In winter, trees are dormant, and sap stays in the roots. As spring approaches and daytime temperatures rise, so does the sap, which flows up into the crown. In an intermittent freeze-thaw cycle—an ideal mix is in the 20s at night and 40s in the day—the sap circulates. "That flow going up and down in the tree is what produces the pressure that pumps the sap out," says Swann.

This is when maple madness begins. The taps are inserted and connected to the tubing. The sap flows down the mountain to the holding tanks and then goes into the evaporator inside the sugar shack. Then it's a round-the-clock job to feed the fire and keep the liquid at a constant temperature. The water is boiled off until the syrup has a sugar concentration of 66 percent. Then the syrup is filtered and bottled by hand. Sap collection can go on for as long as six weeks, up until buds break and the sap turns milky and develops an off flavor.

Because their production is limited, Swann and Munroe sell only locally, direct to customers. Swann sells his maple syrup only from the farm and by appointment until it runs out. Munroe takes advance orders from neighbors and sells any extra at the farmer's market in West Jefferson.

Black Gold

TURN SCRAPS AND YARD WASTE INTO USEFUL COMPOST

By Amy Ney

Grass clippings. Banana peels and orange rinds. Wood chips. Shredded paper and cardboard. Raked leaves. Dryer lint. What do all these have in common? They are organic materials that can easily and inexpensively be combined to create a product useful in your yard, garden and landscaping endeavors: compost.

Adding fruit and vegetable scraps to your bin will make it turn into compost quicker.

Approximately 27 percent of the waste that makes its way into landfills is organic, mostly food remnants and yard waste. Not only does organic matter take up space, but it also generates methane gas and leachate (water produced by the decomposition of items containing carbon that becomes contaminated as it travels through the solid waste in a landfill), both of which can be harmful to the environment. Turning organic matter into compost, however, has many benefits—improving and enriching garden soil, helping to retain moisture and reduce the need for watering, and providing nutrients in a medium that requires little or no added fertilizer or pesticides. And, did I mention that it's free?

What is compost? It is essentially organic matter that has been compiled and then decomposed (hence the name: compost) over time. Fungi, bacteria, worms and heat each help to facilitate the decomposition process. You can use a commercial bin, of which there are several types available, a pile, or if your space is limited, you can even use an indoor bin with worms, called vermicomposting. Bins are best if you would like to incorporate food items. An ideal location for a pile has some shade and is approximately one cubic yard (three feet wide by three feet deep by three feet high), but larger or smaller piles will also work.

The best method involves mixing the ingredients in the pile or bin so that dry ingredients come into contact with wet ingredients. Turning or stirring isn't necessary, but it will help add oxygen for the organisms in the pile, speeding decomposition and reducing odors. The proper moisture content to maintain is about that of a damp sponge. Shredding food scraps and lawn waste into small pieces helps them break down faster, while burying food waste under eight to 10 inches of compost aids in decomposition and helps to reduce any unpleasant smells that may attract rodents or even bears. To speed composition, add greens (nitrogen); to avoid odors, add browns (carbon).

Compost is ready to use when it is dark colored and contains no visible food remnants or yard waste. It may be placed around landscape trees, incorporated into your garden soil, or used to fertilize your lawn or planting beds. Whichever way you choose to use your black gold, it will improve your soil and benefit the plant life it supports, while helping to recycle your waste and conserving landfill space.

Compost is relatively easy to make—just add the four key ingredients—and nature will do the rest! Carbon and nitrogen, plus air and water. A ratio of about 30:1 carbon to nitrogen is desirable, but the pile will work without it being exact; the key for a faster decomposition is simply more browns than greens.

Carbon (brown materials): shredded newspaper and junk mail, dry leaves, nut shells, crumbled egg shells, dryer and vacuum cleaner lint, wood chips, branches and twigs with a diameter of ¼ inch or less, and cardboard rolls.

Nitrogen (green materials): fruit or vegetable remnants (cooked or raw), breads and grains, coffee grounds and filters, grass clippings, tea bags, hair and fur, and green leaves.

Certain items that should not be added to your compost bin or pile include meat or dairy items.

Resources

- Visit your local Cooperative Extension office.
- www.composting101.com
- U.S. EPA publication "Backyard Composting: It's only natural," found at www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/greenscapes/pubs/compost-guide.pdf

Keeping Honey Bees Abuzz

YOU CAN HELP PROTECT AND PROLIFERATE THESE ESSENTIAL INSECTS

Honey bees have been supplying honey for the human race since the Stone Age. Today, there is great concern that their benefits to the world will be diminished, if not lost.

Honey bees provide us not just with honey, but also with beeswax, propolis (a bee glue used in cosmetics and health supplements) and pollination services.

Richard Sanders uses a hydrometer to check the specific gravity of syrup in the evaporator at Maple Creek Farm.

Though several species of honey bees exist, only one species (Apis mellifera) is used extensively for domestic honey production and pollination. An average well-managed domestic hive will contain some 50,000 bees (sometimes as high as 80,000) during the peak of mid-summer. Bees from that one hive can gather up to 80 pounds of pollen in a year, and produce well in excess of 100 pounds of honey annually.

Honey bee species generally visit flowers to collect pollen, their source of protein, and in the process they are responsible for an estimated 80 percent of all insect pollination. Without this pollination, many commercial and home-grown food crops would be greatly reduced.

In 2007 honey bees made the news because a disturbing number (30 to 70 percent) of North American European honey bee hives collapsed. This sudden and unprecedented decline was named colony collapse disorder (CCD). So far researchers have not found a specific cause of CCD, though many scientists suspect it is caused by a combination of factors rather than a single pathogen or poison. Those factors may be loss of habitat, changes in agricultural practices, new viruses and pathogens and extreme weather during the past decade that resulted in impaired protein (pollen) production.

A decline in beekeeping, another contributing factor, has been taking place since the 1950s, according to Tim Tucker, a member of the American Beekeeping Federation's Membership and Marketing Committee.

"For many years the cause of decline was economic in nature and was tied to the availability of other sweeteners on the market," he said. Access to inexpensive sugar and high fructose corn sugar (HFCS) changed consumers' habits, causing many to stop using honey as a home sweetener, he explained.

Compounding that problem are the bees' health issues with new parasitic mites and viruses, which has increased the cost of keeping bees alive.

Protective plantings

Homeowners can take steps to help protect these amazing and economically important creatures, Tucker says. "The main thing homeowners can do is provide plantings of beneficial flowers that bloom during the full season to provide nectar for honey bees and all native pollinators," he said.

"The second thing that can be done is to educate the public to accept a lower level of perfection in their yards and gardens and use less herbicides and pesticides that can affect pollinators," he continued. "It is not a good thing to treat our lawns to remove clovers and even dandelions that provide nectar to bees. While it makes for a less perfect-looking lawn, it is more natural and beneficial to the bees."

Homeowners can also help by providing locations for beekeepers to place bees, especially on the outskirts of towns and suburban environments but also in the countryside, said Tucker. He says that white clovers are wonderful additions, as are shrubs such as spirea, currents, blackberries, blueberries and honeysuckle. Beneficial trees include all fruit-producing trees and ornamental trees such as Bradford pears and black locusts.

Source: Tim Tucker, a member of the American Beekeeping Federation (www.abfnet.org) and editor of ABF's E-Buzz newsletter, wrote this article.

Plant Once, Eat for Years

USING PERENNIAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN YOUR GARDEN

By Katie Lamar Jackson

Planting a garden each year is a rite of spring for most gardeners, but it can be expensive and time consuming. So imagine having fruits and vegetables that come back on their own each year. That can happen in virtually every part of the United States, regardless of the climate, with perennial plants that produce food year after year.

Plants that produce food year after year include asparagus, rhubarb, onions, garlic and kale.

Among those plants are asparagus, rhubarb, onions, kale and other leafy greens, artichokes, garlic, radicchio and horseradish, to name a few. And then there are the fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, figs and, of course, fruit trees.

The idea of perennial food gardening is nothing new. But it is enjoying a revival as more and more gardeners have less and less time (and sometimes less money), and have become more aware of the environmental benefits of planting perennial crops.

To make perennial gardening even more appealing, gardeners are rediscovering less traditional, but delicious and healthy crops, such as bamboo shoots, chayote squash, sunchokes and cardoon. And new edible plants are being discovered regularly, so finding crops that work in any area or climate is becoming easier and easier.

Permaculture approach

Using perennial crops is part of the permaculture system approach to gardening and farming, which uses techniques and practices that combine the best of wildlife gardening, edible landscaping, and native-plant cultivation into one low-maintenance, self-contained and productive ecosystem.

Permaculture was developed and introduced in the 1970s by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. They and others since have promoted the idea of food production and agricultural systems that work with nature rather than trying to work around it.

Permaculture uses organic gardening, sustainable farming and forestry and other practices to create a growing and living environment that is interconnected. Gardeners can gradually turn their landscapes and gardens into ecosystems that provide food not only for people, but also for the insects and animals in the environment. Many perennial food crops, especially fruit trees and shrubs, can also be beautiful additions to the landscape.

Learning more about perennial food crops is easy. A Web search or visit to your local library will offer information. Check out the book "Perennial Vegetables: From Artichoke to Zuiki Taro, A Gardener's Guide to Over 100 Delicious, Easy-to-Grow Edibles" by Chelsea Green or the websites http://perennialvegetables.org and http://perennial-vegetables.blogspot.com.

Katie Lamar Jackson is chief editor at the Auburn University College of Agriculture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.

Scott Bauer/USDA

Blueberries are among perennials that can grow anywhere in North Carolina, if the right species is used and the soil modified as needed.

Water, Water Everywhere

HOW WATER FEATURES CAN ENHANCE YOUR LANDSCAPE

By Katie Lamar Jackson

There's nothing like a water feature to enhance landscapes and homes. Water features are not only beautiful, they can add value to property.

Using them wisely, however, is important. If you are thinking of adding water elements to your world, plan them well and find ways to use the water as efficiently as possible.

Water features can be soothing and relaxing.

Options range from large ponds and flowing streams to pools, fountains and bird baths. To find the right feature for your needs, determine what purpose you hope it will serve. For example, if you simply want the serene sound of trickling water, that can be as easy as using an indoor fountain in a room or office.

If, on the other hand, you want to draw wildlife, enhance an ecosystem or add an impressive focal point to your landscape, then pools, ponds and waterfalls may be your best bets. In this case, you may want to enlist the help of a professional landscape designer.

Know your water resources. If you live in an area with wetlands, a stream or boggy spots, a water feature can turn those natural sources of moisture into something beautiful and beneficial. Sometimes it can even solve runoff and excess water problems around your home and property.

If, in contrast, your site tends to be hot and arid, water can help cool your home or patio and provide much-needed habitat for insects and animals. However, in this case, water can be an expensive option and you'll want to look for ways to use alternative sources of nonpotable water.

And if you live in an urban environment with lots of concrete and hardscape, features such as fountains and water-filled containers not only can beautify your space but help diminish noise pollution as well.

There are several ways to have an economical and environmentally sound water feature. One option is to use rain barrels and cisterns. They collect water from rooftops, which can then be used to irrigate garden areas or feed into fountains and other features. In fact, rain barrels are now available that combine water collection with a water feature, such as a fountain function. You can also collect condensation from air conditioning units and feed this water into water features.

Rain gardens are another option. These are actually garden areas developed to collect and filter pollutants from water that runs off driveways, lawns and other ground surfaces.

If you already have a swimming or reflecting pool, water from either can be recirculated through fountains and waterfalls.

Powering your water feature

But how about powering these water projects? Tranquil water features require no electricity to operate. Aside from making sure the water does not become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, still water can be relatively easy and inexpensive to incorporate. For example, pots filled with water, water plants and fish can be used on porches. Another efficient option used for waterfalls and water gardens is to use natural gravity to move water, such as placing a water feature on a slope so rainwater or streams move along on their own. And another way to save on electricity is to use solar-powered pumps.

Restrictions and safety

Make sure you contact your local municipal authorities to ensure that you are complying with any water and land-use restrictions. Finally, keep in mind that a water feature, no matter how small and shallow, can be a danger to small children and pets. Be sure to secure it as well as possible.

Katie Lamar Jackson is chief editor at the Auburn University College of Agriculture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.

Grasses Are More Than Green

THERE ARE MANY PRETTY ORNAMENTAL GRASSES THAT ARE EASY TO LOVE

By Katie Lamar Jackson

To many people, grass is dense, green coverage for the lawn. In fact, there are many varieties of grass that can be used for so much more—to accent landscapes and patios; to add color, texture and sound to the garden.

Long, swaying grasses may be part of a lovely meadow scene; other grasses serve as a home and food source for wildlife; and some can add interest to a winter landscape.

Think pampas, big and little bluestem, prairie dropseed, cord, porcupine, fountain, feather and hair grasses—the names alone suggest the fabulous array of options available for planting, many of which have the added advantage of being native to an area and, thus, environmentally responsible choices.

Ornamental grasses are highly resistant to insect and disease problems and tolerant of heat and drought.

Ornamental grasses are beautiful and easy to grow and maintain. Give them a home in well-drained soil and sufficient room to grow and they will be happy with hardly any fertilizer or irrigation and only a bit of maintenance.

Grasses of some sort are native to almost every ecosystem, from arctic tundras to arid deserts, and from coastal shores to swamps and wetlands. And "ornamental grasses" aren't limited to just the grass family (Poeceae), but include other grass-like perennials such as sedges, rushes, restios, cat-tails and bamboos.

Assessing the area

To find just the right ornamental grass, begin by assessing the area where they will be used. Determine the lighting and moisture available, then think about what size of plant will work best in that spot. Ornamental grasses range from low-growing groundcovers to giant, towering clumps and come in a wide range of colors and textures, so the only limit is imagination and space. Using only native plants may narrow the options a bit, but there should still be plenty to choose among.

Also, think about what other plants will be included in the area. Will grasses be used with other grasses or with wildflowers, bulbs or bedding plants? Knowing the plant mix you hope to use will help narrow the options.

Now the fun part begins: Choosing the species or cultivars to buy. It helps to see photos, so get a high-quality ornamental grass book, several of which are available at libraries, bookstores and online. Be careful not to pick plants that can become invasive or plants not suited for local conditions. Ornamental grasses should be purchased from reputable dealers as seed, container plants or plugs and bare-root plants. Seed is the least expensive choice but, needless to say, will take a little longer to become established.

Once the grasses are in the ground, keep them well watered and tended until they become established, then sit back and enjoy—no mower needed!

Katie Lamar Jackson is chief editor at the Auburn University College of Agriculture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.

North Carolina landscapes

Residents have many attractive choices for grasses that will thrive here. Dwarf blue fescue (or sheep's fescue) is a favorite for ground cover and good for small gardens. It can be used across North Carolina, as can plume grass and eulalia grass (above). Showy pampas grass (upper left) is hardy throughout the state except in the highest mountain elevations. Weeping lovegrass is popular in eastern North Carolina for eroded areas and slopes. For more ideas, consult with your local garden center or visit North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office's website at www.ces.ncsu.edu for lists and photos.

For the Birds

THE SIMPLEST THING YOU CAN DO TO HELP PROTECT BIRDS IS TO KEEP YOUR CATS INDOORS

by Amy Ney

Do you love to see the red flash of a cardinal wing or hear the cheery warble of a finch? The best thing you can do for your local bird population—even better than a bird feeder, house, or bath—may be the simplest thing possible.

Birds are impacted by human disease, loss of habitat, pesticides, fisheries operations and collisions with man-made objects like towers, windows and wind turbines. Each year in the United States, cats (both domestic and feral) needlessly kill hundreds of millions of birds, plus more than a billion small mammals such as squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. Domestic cats retain their hunting instincts although they may be well fed at home; their prey is sought solely for sport. According to one online blogging bird enthusiast, the average may be as high as approximately 35 birds killed per cat per year. So the simplest thing you can do to help protect our feathered friends? Keep your cats indoors. It's not only good for the birds, but beneficial for you and your cats as well.

Indoor cats have less opportunity to develop an illness or get hurt, so they stay healthier and require fewer visits to the vet. Diseases such as rabies, distemper and feline leukemia are contracted via secretions from or direct contact with an infected source—cats who venture outdoors are at a much greater risk of being infected. Some veterinarians believe that the reduced exposure to these illnesses indicates that indoor cats do not need vaccinations for all of them. (Check with your local veterinarian about required vaccines in your area.) Also you may save vet expenses and reduce your cat's likelihood of a reaction to a vaccine. Keeping your feline indoors results in a healthier cat that is easier and cheaper to care for.

You also are likely to stay healthier if your cat remains in the house. Cats who venture outdoors can easily transport unwanted creatures like worms, fleas and ticks in their fur. Fleas and ticks can cause costly and irritating infestations that can make you ill and affect your entire household.

In addition, indoor cats live much longer than their outdoor counterparts. The average life expectancy of an indoor cat is often more than 15 years, while outdoor cats are only expected to live for two to five years. The out-of-doors is a dangerous place for felines: animal attacks, diseases, deadly encounters with vehicles, and even poisoning are all possibilities.

So how can you transition your furry feline from an outdoor cat to an exclusively indoor one? A few suggestions:

- Provide a perch—in a sunny spot, if possible—where cats can watch the out-of-doors. (My cats can view a hanging outdoor bird feeder which I call "kitty TV.")
- Brush and play with your cats regularly.
- Household objects like string, boxes and bags provide endless free entertainment.
- Keeping the litter box clean makes it more appealing to use.
- A screened porch or enclosed deck allows for a safe outdoor experience for cats.
- Give your cat regular, "well-kitty" vet care.
- Spay or neuter your pet early in life.

Birds are beneficial to us in many ways, from pollinating crops and controlling insect pests to providing an enjoyable sport for millions of Americans. Together we can shield declining bird species by providing an indoor environment for our cats—a safe, simple, and free method to protect ourselves, our pets, and our pocketbooks.

Resources

- American Bird Conservancy publication "Cats, Birds, and You," www.abcbirds.org
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service fact sheet "Migratory Bird Mortality" www.fws.gov/[illegible] mortality-fact-sheet.pdf
- The Birdchaser blog, http://birdchaser.blogspot.com/

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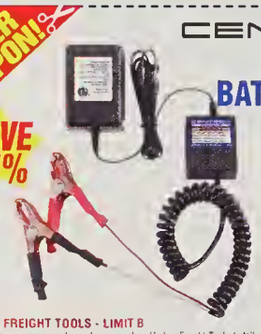

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92869293

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9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

PITTSBURGH

SAVE 53%

SAE LOT NO. 42304/ 69043

METRIC LOT NO. 42305

Item 42304 shown

YOUR CHOICE!

$5.99 REG. PRICE $12.99

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96626173

SUPER COUPON!

LOT NO. 98085

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Bunker Hill Security

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SAVE $50

BAOLAND WINCHES

2000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

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LOT NO. 68146

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45037823

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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

SAVE $70

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY FLOOR JACK

Item 68048 shown

$69.99 REG. PRICE $139.99

LOT NO. 68048/69227

WEIGHS 74 LBS.

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75808580

SUPER COUPON!

LOT NO. 68287 drillmaster

18 VOLT CORDLESS 3/8" DRILL/DRIVER AND FLASHLIGHT KIT

Includes one 18V NiCd battery and charger.

SAVE 50%

$19.99 REG. PRICE $39.99

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91370398

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LOW-PROFILE CREEPER

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300 LB. CAPACITY

Tools sold separately.

SAVE 47%

Item 2745 shown

$18.49 REG. PRICE $34.99

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56522296

SUPER COUPON!

CENTRALPNEUMATIC

3 GALLON 100 PSI OILLESS AIR COMPRESSOR

Item 97080 shown

LOT NO. 97080/69269

SAVE 50%

$39.99 REG. PRICE $79.99

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SUPER COUPON!

29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED DRILL BIT SET

LOT NO. 5889

drill master

SAVE 60% $9.99 REG. PRICE $24.99

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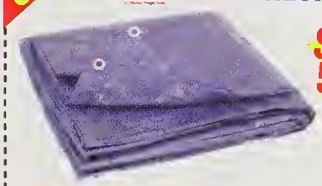
HFT

LOT NO. 877



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92550334

SUPER COUPON!

80 PIECE ROTARY TOOL SET

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

LOT NO. 97626/68986

SAVE 70% $7.49 REG. PRICE $24.99

Item 97626 shown

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68867973

SUPER COUPON!

SAVE 53%

WIRELESS DRIVEWAY ALERT SYSTEM

Bunker Hill Security

LOT NO. 93068

Requires one 9 volt and three C batteries (sold separately).

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39185262

SUPER COUPON!

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PITTSBURGH

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92821486

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31023127

SUPER COUPON!

ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW SHARPENER

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Item 68221 shown

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12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

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50199528

SUPER COUPON!

WINDSOR DESIGN

60" HARDWOOD WORKBENCH

LOT NO. 93454/69054

SAVE $85 Item 93454 shown

$144.99 REG. PRICE $229.99

Tools sold separately.

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37171963

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ADJUSTABLE SHADE AUTO-DARKENING WELDING HELMET

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING

LOT NO. 46092

SAVE 50% $34.99 REG. PRICE $69.99

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25828645

SUPER COUPON!

SAVE 37%

2 PIECE STEEL LOADING RAMPS

Haul Master

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88186449

SUPER COUPON!

US GENERAL

580 LB. CAPACITY FOUR DRAWER ROLLER CART

SAVE $130

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34462564

SUPER COUPON!

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING

90 AMP FLUX WIRE WELDER

Item 68887 shown

SAVE $60 NO GAS REQUIRED! LOT NO. 68887/ 98871

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Margaret Maron

A celebrated mystery writer who celebrates country life

By Margaret Buranen

There's an old adage that writers do their best work when they write about what they know best. North Carolina writer Margaret Maron proves this true with her mystery series about District Judge Deborah Knott, set in fictional rural Colleton County, N.C.

One of three children, Maron grew up on her grandparents' tobacco farm in Johnston County. The family also grew corn, cotton and watermelons and "we raised most of our vegetables, which we canned or froze; plus peanuts, apples, pears and peaches," Maron recalled.

She and her sibliings knew tobacco raising firsthand. "It was all hard work—from weeding the plant bed to housing the green leaves in the heat of summer. I hated the tar on my hands and I wasn't crazy about picking off hornworms," she said.

Things improved with cooler weather. "Grading the cured leaves in the fall wasn't bad, though. The sweet smell of those golden leaves is a lovely lingering memory."

Like many young people raised on farms, Maron craved the excitement of city living. She dreamed of becoming a writer, too. "As a teenager, I couldn't wait to get off of the farm. It took learning and living in urban settings for more than 10 years to make me realize that I'm really a 'country mouse' who will always be happier living on a dirt road in the middle of nowhere," she said.

Maron found that she missed "the space and the peacefulness and just having a plot of dirt to dig in" Her city-raised husband Joe, an artist, was also content to move to the country.

The farm is still in Maron's family, though no cash crops are grown there. Gardening is the focus. "We still raise tomatoes, okra, squash, zucchini, flowers, onions; and we keep a 'salad bowl' of lettuce, spinach and tendergreen going in a cold frame all winter. We also have figs, pears, blueberries and raspberries for our own use and to share with friends and family."

In the book "Hard Row," Deborah Knott's nieces and nephews evaluate different crops to grow on some of the family's land. One of their final choices is tuberoses, inspired by Maron's

"I'm really a 'country mouse' who will always be happier living on a dirt road in the middle of nowhere." —*Maron*

cousins in Virginia whose main cash crop is tuberoses. "A more beautiful field you'll never see," she said. "Or more fragrant. I thought this might be something the kids might want to try. They may also try growing sunflowers both as cut flowers in the summer and for organic bird seed in the winter."

Maron knows exactly what crop she would grow in lieu of tobacco. "Don't get me started! I'm infuriated that our politicians are too cowardly to advocate growing hemp. Industrial hemp would be a wonderful crop for North Carolina farmers as tobacco is being phased out."

Maron cited several reasons for her choice. "It's a renewable resource that doesn't require pesticides or tons of chemicals to grow. It has so many uses—paper, fabrics, building materials—and more are being discovered every day, but as long as it's called 'hemp' instead of 'the paper plant,' our lawmakers won't touch the legislation that would legalize our growing it, even though you'd have to smoke a ton of the stuff to get a decent high."

A message about rural places

Urban sprawl from Raleigh-Durham, the inherent conflict between land owners and developers, and the fast conversion of pastures into suburban housing tracts are aspects of another issue that reappears in the Deborah Knott series.

The Knott family, even the teenagers, rail against motorists who fling fast food wrappers along the county road that runs by their property. They also, as a family project, clean up the litter frequently and take pride in the sign that proclaims the family's sponsorship of the road.

"Zoning regulations seem to be set by the county commissioners, and county commissioners seem to favor growth and sprawl as a stronger tax base, never mind the loss of family farms," lamented Maron.

Asked about favorite rural places in North Carolina, Maron said she didn't have any. "When you live in a rural area year 'round, you want a change of pace if you leave—which is why I love to visit New York now!"

Maron's first mystery series features Sigrid Harald, a New York City detective who deals with art crimes. She started the Deborah Knott series later, with "Bootlegger's Daughter," which won all the major awards for mystery writing in 1992. This book focuses on the relationship of Deborah and her widowed father, the clan's aging patriarch, a farmer and reformed bootlegger. Both of them are stubborn. She's educated, frequently impetuous. He's sharp, from the school of life experience, and usually patient.

Maron said of bootlegging, "I myself never saw moonshine being made although I did know that one or two men in the community were said to make their own."

Most of Deborah's older brothers and their families live either on the farm or in nearby small towns in fictional Colleton County. They are believable characters, genuinely reflective of rural North Carolina in interests and concerns.

"All writers are shaped by their experiences, so of course, my farm background finds its way into my writing," she explained.

As a District Judge, Deborah Knott sometimes fills in for other judges, conveniently allowing Maron to let her solve mysteries elsewhere, such as the High Point Furniture Market ("Killer Market"), Wrightsville Beach ("Sand Sharks"), and the Blue Ridge Mountains ("High Country Fall").

Maron, who writes from spring through fall in a screened white gazebo on the farm, has served as visiting writer at Duke. She has written 26 novels and two collections of short stories. In 2008, she won the North Carolina Award for Literature, the state's highest civilian honor. She has been president of the Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and the American Crime Writers League.

Margaret Maron appreciates the awards and professional recognition. But what means the most is the chance to live on her family's farm and share some of rural North Carolina with her readers: "I love it when my readers write me that I must have been at their last family reunion because I seem to be telling the stories of their families, whether they live in Idaho, Maine or Louisiana. The crops may differ, but the ethos is the same."

Margaret Buranen is a writer and avid mystery reader who lives in Lexington, Ky.

Above, opposite page: *What's a vegetable garden without flowers for the summer table?*

Above, top: *Maron's granddaughter loves to dig for potatoes.*

Above, bottom: *The gazebo where Maron writes from spring to fall.*

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by March 7 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our April issue, will receive $25.

February winner

The February photo by Karen House shows a pair of old postal service Jeeps in western Randolph County. They can be seen on the north side of Hwy. 64 west in the Tabernacle community near EnergyUnited's substation and the Tabernacle Fire Department. More than 200 of you recognized them correctly. The winning answer, chosen at random from all the correct entries, was from Richard David Pickett of Star, a member of Randolph EMC.

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Facial Wrinkles and Lines – Can a Cream Work as Good as an Injection?

DEAR DORRIS: I am a 45 year old, beautiful (so I think) woman who is considering getting an injection like Botox to fill my wrinkles. The lines on my forehead are relatively deep, and I am sick of looking so much older than I really am. Some other women at my job have used injections and they instantly looked years younger and much better than me.

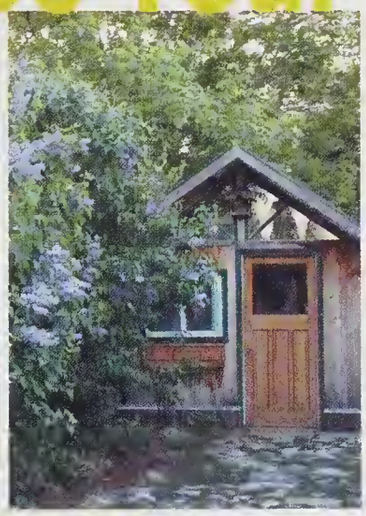
My self-esteem is dropping because I feel like the "old lady" at work, and I refuse to even go for happy hour with the others from work, because I feel so old. I can't really afford the expensive injections though, and frankly, I am petrified of the needle and dangers that go along with it. Is there any cream out there that can bring the same instant result, and wrinkle filling effect that the injectable treatments can?

Wrinkled and Scared, Charlotte, NC

DEAR WRINKLED AND SCARED : Luckily for many people, there is a new product on the market that is the only true topical dermal filler I have found. It is called the Dermagist Phenomenon Dermal Filler. It is a cream that treats wrinkles with peptide-based science that makes your skin produce collagen and elastin, which rapidly helps heal your wrinkles. **PLUS**, it contains a highly revered and talked about complex called Metahylate®. This complex gathers and directs wrinkle-filling moisture directly into the wrinkles, giving a very precise treatment... much like a needle can give. Additionally, the cream has microscopic prisms in it that reflect light, leaving a wrinkle virtually invisible to the naked eye.

Since it's priced affordably, and is much safer than an injectable wrinkle treatment, it will not be long until the whole world is talking about it. **The Dermagist Phenomenon®** Dermal Filler is available online at **Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355.** Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was **"NCP1".** It's worth a try to see if it still works.

Show Us Your Amazing Shed



Used to be, the shed was utilized to store farm and garden tools and materials. Period. But folks today use shed kits, convert existing sheds, and build and buy new sheds to create home studios, workshops, offices, playhouses, even pool cabanas. They dress up their sheds with window shutters, window boxes, art, advertising signs and other decorative touches. If you have an amazing shed, send us one or two photos of your shed, and the story behind it.

A panel of judges will select the pictures we will publish in our May 2012 magazine. We will pay $50 for each shed published. We retain reprint rights. We may post on our website more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)

RULES:

Deadline is March 15, 2012

Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 1800 pixels. Prints a minimum 4 by 6 inches.

Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and email address or phone number.

If you want your print returned, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)

SEND TO:

E-mail: editor@carolinacountry.com
Mention "Sheds" in subject line.

Mail: Carolina Country Photo Contest
3400 Sumner Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27616

"Cold Pursuit"

Art by Ronald Ragland

"Hot Pursuit"

"Cold Pursuit" is the latest print by Raleigh artist Ronald Ragland. After the success of the "Hot Pursuit" art print, Ronald heard from rabbit hunters asking him to paint a winter scene with beagles chasing a snowshoe hare, the rabbit with large hind legs that turns from brown to white during the winter. Both prints are signed and numbered, measuring 16-by-20 inches and printed full color on museum-quality paper for $60 each (includes shipping).

Ragland Prints
4215 Jane Lane
Raleigh, NC 27604

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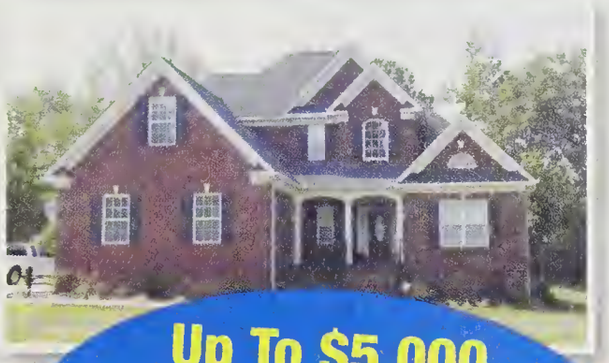

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I Remember...

My mother-in-law and her quilt.

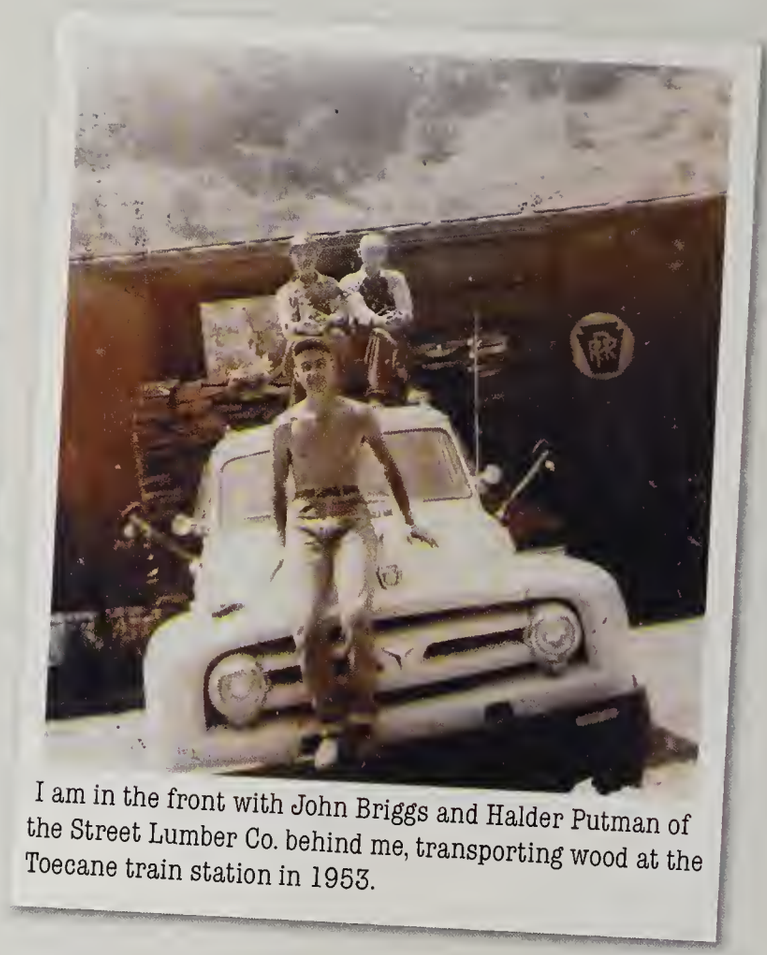
Mrs. Bill's sewing

I married a man raised on a farm in Fayetteville. His mother had 10 children. Besides raising vegetables and other crops, they raised pigs, cows and chickens. This provided the family with a lot of feedbags. These were used for clothes, quilts and other household items. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Bill, always wore dresses and aprons made from the printed bags. She made underwear from the white bags.

By1956, we had three daughters and one son. Mrs. Bill was generous with what she had and would share food from her garden. She also shared her leftover printed feed bags which were suitable for children's clothes. This was very helpful to us with a growing family.

In 1977, Mrs. Bill passed away at the age of 89 years. A quilt top she made from scraps left over from sewing clothes was given to me. One February winter day, my husband and I quilted the top on the kitchen table. I used a soft backing and made double bias from the same material. My husband helping me with the quilting made it more precious to me. It did not matter that his stitches were larger than mine.

Mary F. Bill, Fayetteville, South River EMC



I am in the front with John Briggs and Halder Putman of the Street Lumber Co. behind me, transporting wood at the Toecane train station in 1953.

Lumber, trains and man power

The year was 1953 and I was 20 years old, working for the Street Logging and Lumber Company, established by my father, Chester Street, in Buladean, Mitchell County. Back then, there were no machines in the lumber business, with the exception of motor vehicles, and all work was done by horses and man power. We transported the lumber to the nearest train station at Toecane, where it was then shipped to places all over the country. The Toecane train station during that time was a booming place, a center for both commerce and social life for the residents of northern Mitchell County.

Today, the Street Lumber Company is still in the family, under the direction of myself and my son, Milan. However, nowadays, lots of the work that was once done by horses and manual labor is done by machines. The once thriving metropolis of Toecane has slowed to the occasional whistle of a passing train as it moves on to a larger station, no longer stopping at the small community. The changes in the lumber business in nearly 60 years may have made the work easier, but the time of booming train stations, horses and man power will always hold a certain nostalgic eminence.

Marshall Street, Buladean, French Broad Electric

SEND US YOUR *Memories*

We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine. We can put even more on our Internet sites, but can't pay for them. (If you don't want them on the Internet, let us know.)

Guidelines:

1. Approximately 200 words.
2. Digital photos must be at least 600kb or 1200 by 800 pixels.
3. No deadline, but only one entry per household per month.
4. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want yours returned.
5. We pay $50 for each one published in the magazine. We retain reprint rights.
6. Include your name, mailing address and the name of your electric cooperative.
7. **E-mail:** iremember@carolinacountry.com **Or by U.S. mail:** I Remember, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616

Log cabin days

The log cabin I grew up in did not have electricity, running water or a bathroom, and it was heated with an old woodstove. The cabin was surrounded by tobacco fields which my Dad, Grandpaw and other family members helped take care of. I remember getting to ride on the horse-drawn tobacco sled to and from the field. Back then my days were spent playing with my cousin outside taking turns riding my pedal car and my tricycle. We did not have much money then, but we had what counted: love.

Wanda Burke, Mocksville, EnergyUnited

My puppy and I posing in my Champion pedal car in front of the log cabin I lived in as a child.

Waking Mother

Mother and Daddy worked at a textile mill in Gastonia when I was growing up. Mother worked the night shift, and Daddy would wake her as he left for the second shift. My sister Janice and I were not allowed to wake Mother during the day however. It was a strict rule with unpleasant consequences. I think parents were much stricter in the 1950s.

Janice was 4 and I was in the second grade when it happened. I came home from school one day, and Daddy had already gone to work; Mother was still sleeping; and Janice was nowhere to be found. I looked everywhere. I was sure she had been kidnapped! I knew what to do, because I had seen things like this on TV.

We didn't have a telephone, so I walked to a store down the road, called the police, and reported that my little sister had been kidnapped. "Where are your parents?" the officer asked. I said, "Daddy is working and Mother is sleeping."

He told me to go home, wake Mother and ask where my sister was. "I can't! She works on the third shift, and I will get a whipping if I wake her up." He insisted that I go home, wake Mother and call him back if she didn't know where my sister was.

To my surprise (and great relief), I didn't get a whipping. It turns out that Janice had gone to spend the night with family friends. I was married before I ever got the nerve to tell Mother what I had done

Diane (Trammell) Ledford, Gastonia, Rutherford EMC

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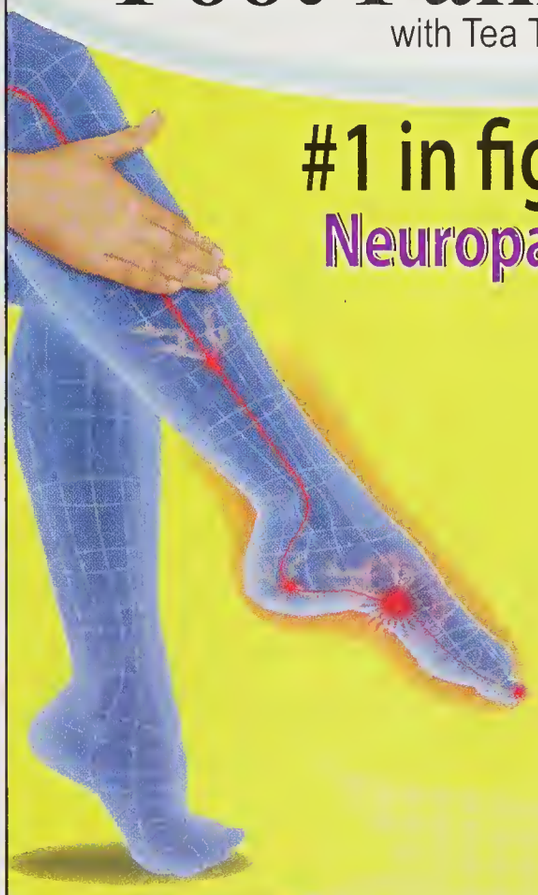

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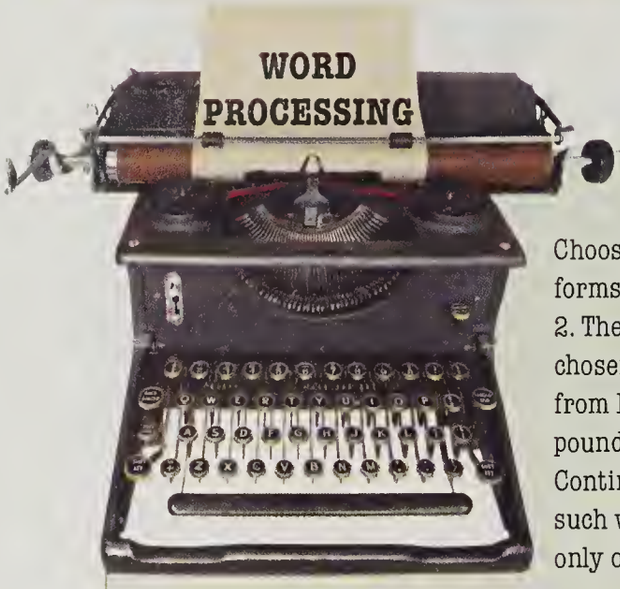
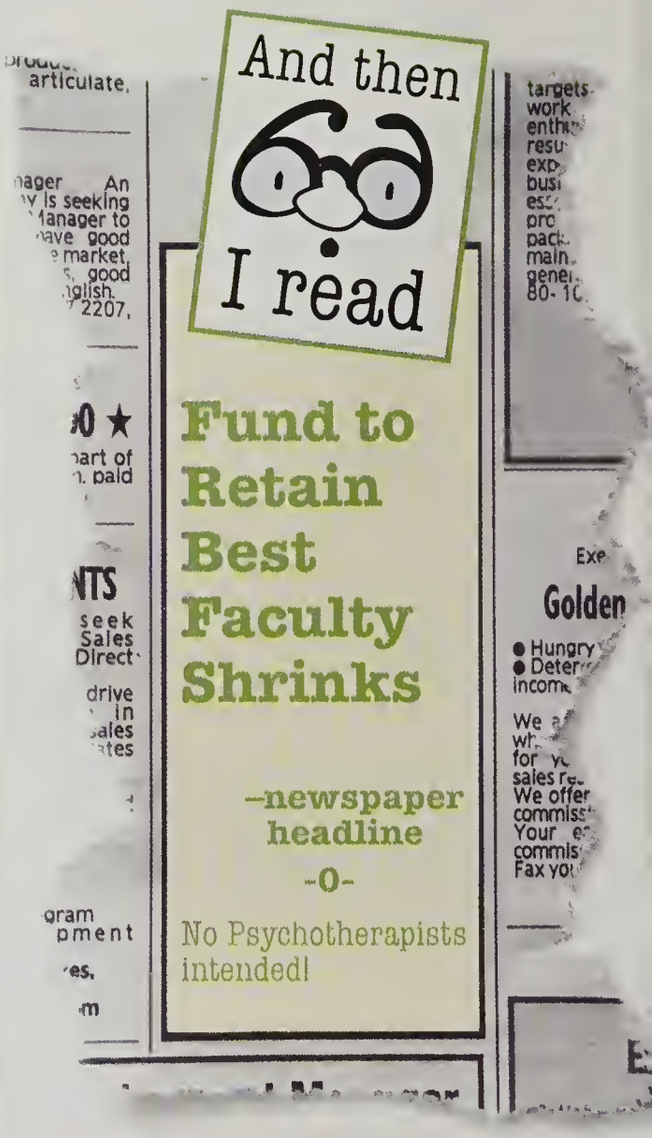


Choose a word from No. 1 that forms a word or phrase with No. 2. Then, with the word you have chosen from No. 2 choose a word from No. 3 to form another compound word or two-word phrase. Continue this way to form four such words or phrases. There is only one answer.

Example: turnover oversee seesaw sawhorse

1.	carry	fish	handle	out	soft
2.	soap	bar	out	hook	man
3.	law	show	shot	room	dish
4.	pan	book	service	off	put
5.	rain	music	shell	candle	handle

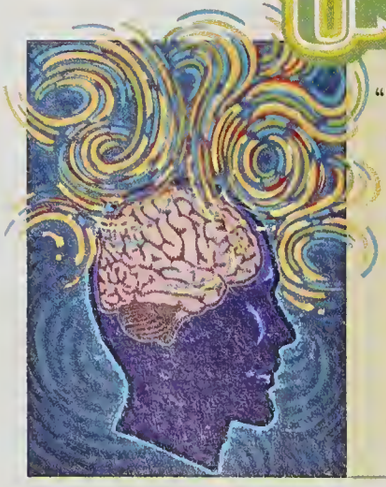


HAIKU

COLD COMFORT

How fit that a verse,
as brief as a passing breeze,
should sound like a sneeze.
–Haiku!!

UNSCRAMBLIT



"The brain is a wonderful organ. It starts the minute you get up in the morning and doesn't stop until you

G__ __ ___ _____."
a c e e l e m c l r r b s c

–Robert Frost

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

C E F G H I O T means
s c r a m b l e

Domi-No.s

M	A	R	C	H
			X	M
9		1		
W	I	N	D	S

Each letter in this multiplication problem stands for a digit. Given W=9 and N=1, can you replace the missing digits to find the value of MARCH WINDS?

For answers, please see page 43

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New quilt shop

There's a new shop in eastern North Carolina for quilters, crafters and those who sew to enjoy. Quilt Lizzy, located on Macon Street in pretty Warrenton, offers most any kind of quilt-related service. The shop's main focus is on long arm services, where staff takes a customer's pieced top and "sandwiches" it (adding batting, backing and quilting). The average cost to sandwich a quilt ranges from around $75 for a baby quilt on up to $275 for a king-sized quilt. The shop's longarm system works for either machine-pieced tops or hand-sewn tops. (If you have an unfinished top, Quilt Lizzy can handle this as well.) Quilt Lizzy sells thousands of yards of name-brand fabrics, including Moda, Northcott, Hoffman, Blank, Timeless Treasures, Quilting Treasures, Anna Griffin and Art Gallery. Owner Susan Blevins, a Halifax EMC member, is enthusiastic, skilled and ready to assist with creating or finishing quilts. She invites customers to come in and select finishes or they can ship their work to her. The shop's website includes photos of custom quilts and a handy estimator to calculate costs.

(252) 257-7117
www.quiltlizzy.com

Homemade pound cakes

Whether you want to send a cake to say "I love you" to someone special or send one to thank your customers for their business, Busy Bee Gourmet can assist by mailing one of its special pound cakes. This family operation is based in Montgomery County and owned by Barbara Haywood, who is a member of the Pee Dee Electric co-op. Busy Bee Gourmet sells a variety of pound cakes, from the traditional butter pound cake to strawberry pound cake to blueberry pound cake made with blueberries grown on the family's farm; other flavors also available. Mainstay ingredients include Swan's brand cake flour, real vanilla extract, pure cane sugar and fresh eggs. Within the shipping box, each cake is packaged in a gift box with ribbon. Available in 8-inch and 10-inch sizes, prices range from $21 to $30, depending on size and flavor, plus shipping. Mail orders may also be submitted to: Busy Bee Gourmet, 481 Blake Loop Rd., Mount Gilead, NC, 27306.

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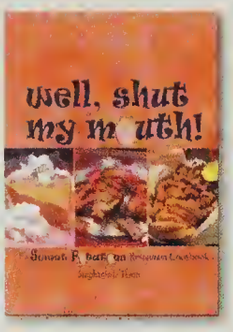
on the bookshelf



Well, shut my mouth!

This cookbook serves up recipes from the Sweet Potatoes Restaurant, recipes gleaned from the families of chef Stephanie Tyson, the book's author, and restaurant co-owner Vivian Joiner. The recipes' names whet one's appetite, such as Sweet Potato, Corn, and Country Ham Risotto; Gullah Shrimp and Crab Pilau; Slow Cooker Chocolate Stout Pot Roast; Down-Home 'Tata Salad; Molasses Dijon Dressing; and Sweet Potato Bread Pudding with Pecan Crunch Topping. Most recipes include a bit of flavorful commentary from Tyson, such as this definition: "Cracklings are deep-fried crispy skins of various animals—in this case, pork." The cookbook also relates the history of the two women who started the nationally acclaimed restaurant in Winston-Salem. In creating the recipes, Tyson used all of her influences: Geechee flavor from Joiner's father, who was from the Hilton Head area of South Carolina; her mother's working-woman "out of the can and into the pan" shortcuts; her culinary arts training at Baltimore International College and work at other restaurants. "Well, Shut My Mouth! The Sweet Potatoes Restaurant Cookbook" is published by John F. Blair, Publisher in Winston-Salem. Softcover, 238 pages, $19.95.

(800) 222-9796
www.blairpub.com

Becoming Elizabeth Lawrence

Playwright and actress Ann Preston Bridgers founded Raleigh Little Theatre. Elizabeth Lawrence was the first female to graduate from the landscape design program at what is now North Carolina State University. Elizabeth was struggling to make a career when there was little work for landscape designers, especially women. She and Ann, who had a talent for mentoring, struck up a friendship in the early 1930s that endured until Ann's death in 1967. Ann guided Elizabeth to write articles for the new women's magazines. By 1942, Elizabeth was so successful that her classic "A Southern Garden" was published, and she became one of America's best garden writers. Edited by Emily Herring Wilson, "Becoming Elizabeth Lawrence" features their correspondence. Elizabeth wrote about family, friends, books, plays, travels, ideas and writing. Through the letters, readers glimpse what life in a Southern town was like for women, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, and learn about gardening, friendship and the lost art of letter writing. "Becoming Elizabeth Lawrence—Discovered Letters of a Southern Gardener" is hardcover, 224 pages, $19.95.

Editor's note: Today, you can visit the garden Elizabeth made at her Charlotte home, as well as another garden and bird sanctuary just up the street created by Elizabeth and Edwin Clarkson. For more, visit www.winghavengardens.com

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March Events

Lightnin' Wells will appear in The Piedmont Blues Show on March 2 in New Bern along with Jon Shain. The blues celebration will be at Cullman Performance Hall at the North Carolina History Center next to Tryon Palace. Tickets are $20, $18 for DEFAS and Council of Friends members and active duty military, and $10 for students. Call (252) 633-6444 or visit www.downeastfolkarts.org.

Mountains west of I-77

Basic Wilderness First Aid
March 10, Chimney Rock
(828) 287-6113
www.chimneyrockpark.com

Guided Hike
Areas not yet open to public
March 10, Chimney Rock
(828) 287-6113
www.foothillsconservancy.org

Carolina Gospel Association
March15, Rutherfordton
(828) 287-6113
www.carolinagospel.com

TJ Renaissance Festival
March 17, Avondale-Henrietta
(828) 980-4723
http://tjca.teamcfa.org/calendar/2012/3

Glenn Miller Orchestra
Big band jazz
March 20, Spindale
(828) 287-6113
www.foundationshows.org

Author Carolyn Sakowski
March 22, Lake Lure
(828) 287-6113
www.mountainsbranchlibrary.org

Community Band Spring Concert
March 25, Asheville
(828) 926-8478
www.ashevillecommunityband.org

Listing Information

Deadlines:
For May: March 25
For June: April 25

Submit Listings Online:
Visit www.carolinacountry.com and click "See NC" to add your event to the magazine and/or our website. Or e-mail events@carolinacountry.com.

Attracting Butterflies, Birds & Bees
March 31, Chimney Rock
(828) 287-6113
www.chimneyrockpark.com

ONGOING

Street Dance
Mondays, Hendersonville
(828) 693-9708
www.historichendersonville.org

Bluegrass Music Jam
Thursdays, Marion
(828) 652-2215

Elliott Daingerfield: Art & Life in North Carolina
Through March 31, Blowing Rock
(828) 295-9099
www.blowingrockmuseum.org

Mountain music
Tuesday & Saturday through Dec. 28
Sparta
(336) 372-4591
http://alleghanyjubilee.com

King Lear
March 16–April 1, Hickory
(828) 327-3855
www.hct.org

My Favorite Things
Songs of Rodgers & Hammerstein
March 28–April 22, Flat Rock
(828) 693-0731
www.flatrockplayhouse.org

Piedmont between I-77 & I-95

Elvis Presley meets Shakespeare
Musical comedy
March 2, Littleton
(252) 519-2603
www.lakeandtheatrenc.com

ArtsBall
Includes auctions, dancing
March 2, Mount Airy
(336) 786-7998
www.surryarts.org

The Slate Mountain Ramblers
Old-time dance
March 3, Mount Airy
(336) 786-7998
www.surryarts.org

Star Fiddlers' Convention
March 3, Biscoe
(910) 428-9218

Camellia Show
March 3–4, Fayetteville
(910) 860-0985

Spring Fling
March 9, Warrenton
(252) 257-2657
www.warren-chamber.org

Quilters Guild Craft Fair
March 9–10, Charlotte
(704) 795-1548
www.charlottequiltersguild.org/quiltshows.html

Roanoke Canal Half-Marathon & 8k
March 10, Roanoke Rapids
(252) 519-2603
www.canalrace.com

Highfalls Fiddlers' Convention
March 10, Robbins
(910) 464-3600
http://tinyurl.com/27gq84c

Bill Leslie & Lorica
Art, Appalachian
Celtic music, storytelling
March 11, Clayton
(919) 553-1737
www.theclaytoncenter.com

The Bear Facts
Learn about native black bears
March 11, Hollister
(252) 519-2603
www.visithalifax.com

Brain Week
March 13–17, Durham
(919) 220-5429
www.lifeandscience.org

Woodcarving Festival
March 17, Raleigh
(919) 876-0707

Morris Family
Voice of Blue Ridge series
March 17, Mount Airy
(336) 786-7998
www.surryarts.org

Hike Bluff Loop Trail
Medoc Mountain State Park
March 18, Hollister
(252) 519-2603
www.visithalifax.com

Horse Trials II
March 23–25, Southern Pines
(910) 875-2074
www.carolinahorsepark.com

Stuart Little
Children's story
March 29, Asheboro
(336) 633-0208
www.randolph.edu/newevents/culturalarts.php

A Tribute to Motown
March 31, Roanoke Rapids
(252) 519-2603
http://rrcitytheatre.com

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Third Thursdays, Durham
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Art After Hours
Second Fridays, Wake Forest
(919) 570-0765
www.sunflowerstudiowf.com

Betty Lynn (Thelma Lou)
Andy Griffith Museum
Third Fridays, Mount Airy
(336) 786-7998
www.visitmayberry.com

Arts Councils' Fourth Friday
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www.theartscouncil.org

Science Madness
Saturdays in March, Durham
(919) 220-5429
www.lifeandscience.org

Farmers Market
1st & 3rd Saturdays, Wake Forest
(919) 671-9269
www.wakeforestmarket.org

Cuttin' Up
True stories of barbers
Through March 4, Charlotte
(704) 458-4105
www.actorstheatrecharlotte.org

Southern Spring Home & Garden Show
Through March 4, Charlotte
(704) 849-0248
www.southernshows.com

Converge Exhibit
Artists Quiesqueya Henriquez and Sonya Clark
Through March 24, Charlotte
(704) 332-5535
www.mccollcenter.org

Mummies Of The World
Through April 8, Charlotte
(704) 372-6261
www.discoveryplace.org

100 Years Of Girl Scouting
Through July, Raleigh
(919) 807-7900
www.ncmuseumofhistory.org

Guest Artist Gail O'Neil
March 9–April 12, Wake Forest
(919) 870-0822
www.sunflowerstudiowf.com

Ebb & Flow
Art exhibit
Through March 25, Hillsborough
(919) 732-5001
www.hillsboroughgallery.com

Mt. Gilead Music Barn
Saturday nights
March 3–June 30, Mt. Gilead
(910) 220-6426
www.mgmusicbarn.com

St. Patrick's Day Show
March 9–17, Littleton
(252) 519-2603
www.lakelandtheatre.com

The Adventures of Nate the Great
Youth spoof of "B" movie mysteries
March 9–25, Raleigh
(919) 821-4579
www.raleighlittletheatre.org

Woman's Club Antiques Show & Sale
March 30–April 1, Wake Forest
(919) 562-7770
www.wake-forest-womans-club.com

War for Empire
French, Indian War history
March 31–April 1, Statesville
(704) 873-5882
www.fortdobbs.org

Coast east of I-95

The Piedmont Blues Show
March 2, New Bern
(252) 354-2444
www.downeastfolkarts.org

Cheerleading Contest
March 3, Jacksonville
(910) 347-5332
www.onslowcountync.gov/parks

Rumba on the Lumber
Chili cook-off, 5k race, Kidz Zone
March 3, Lumberton
(910) 739-9999
www.robesonroadrunners.com

Home Builders Show
March 3–4, Greenville
(252) 329-4200

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www.onslowcountync.gov/parks

Onslow Senior Games
March 5, Jacksonville
(910) 347-5332
www.onslowcountync.gov/parks

8k Road Race
March 10, Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.greenvillenc.gov

Contra Dance
March 10, Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.ecu.edu/org/ecufolk/Calendar.html

Percy Sledge In Concert
March 10, Rocky Mount
(252) 985-5197
www.dunncenter.com

Thunder In The East
Civil War in Eastern N.C.
March 10, New Bern
(919) 807-7389
www.ncculture.com

Red Clay Ramblers Concert
March 16, Rocky Mount
(252) 985-5197
www.dunncenter.com

Salsa Dance
March 16, Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.ecu.edu/org/ecufolk/Calendar.html

Cape Fear Wildlife Expo
March 16–18, Wilmington
(910) 795-0292
www.capefearwildlifeexpo.com

Red Clay Ramblers
Meets Croatan High School Band
March 17, Ocean
(252) 393-8185
www.nccoast.org

Chili Cook-Off
March 17, Scotland Neck
(252) 519-2603
www.shwpark.com

Still On The Hill Concert
March 17, Beaufort
(252) 354-2444
www.downeastfolkarts.org

War So Terrible
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March 17, Four Oaks
(919) 807-7389
www.ncculture.com

Spring Shopping Spree
Knobbs Creek Recreation Center
March 24, Elizabeth City
(252) 335-7346
www.girlsincofthealbemarle.com

Pitch, Hit & Run
Youth Skills Competition of MLB
March 24, Richlands
(910) 347-5332
www.onslowcountync.gov/parks

All The Good Stuff
Up and coming duo
March 30, Rocky Mount
(252) 985-5197
www.dunncenter.com

Easter Egg Hunts
March 31, Onslow County
(910) 347-5332
www.onslowcountync.gov/parks

Kidsfest
March 31, Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.mppfc.org

BBQ Pork Sale
Little Swift Creek Fire Dept
March 31, Ernul
(919) 614-0257

ONGOING

Art Walk
First Friday, Elizabeth City
(252) 335-5330
http://ecncart.com

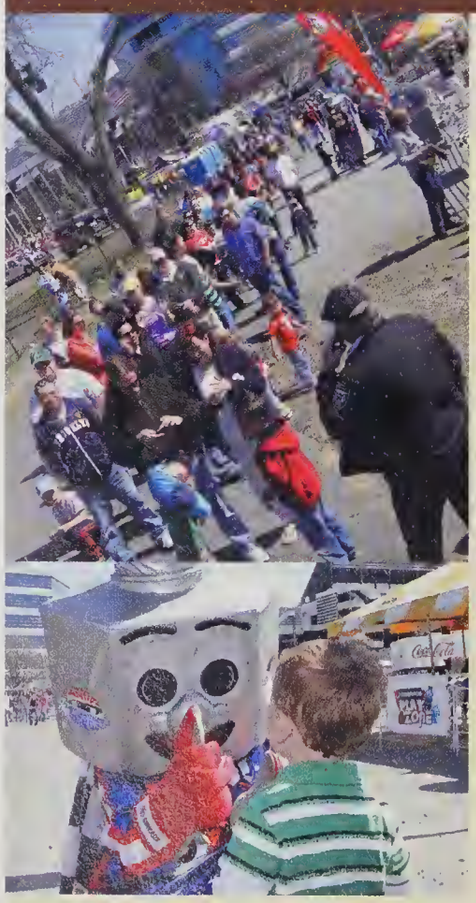
Art Walk
First Friday, Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.uptowngreenville.com

NC Art Pottery
Through May 1, Elizabeth City
(252) 331-4037
www.museumofthealbemarle.com

Priceless Pieces Quilt Show
March 3–24, Manteo
(252) 480-0752

"Flags Over Hatteras"
Civil War exhibits
Through July 31, Hatteras
(252) 986-2995
www.graveyardoftheatlantic.com

March 17 Appreciation Day for racing fans



Admission is free to Charlotte Motor Speedway Fan Appreciation Day, set for Saturday, March 17. Festivities include speedway tours and children's activities.

NACSAR's roots run deep in North Carolina's soil, so much that stock car racing is North Carolina's official state sport. So it's only natural that on March 17, a day people usually associate with shamrocks and a certain beloved Irish saint, some North Carolinians will be celebrating auto racing as well.

In fact, Charlotte Motor Speedway and related motorsport entities will be tipping their hats, green or otherwise, to racing fans to thank them for their patronage. The Charlotte Motor Speedway Fan Appreciation Day is planned for Saturday, March 17, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free.

The event offers speedway tours, children's activities, music, free popcorn and opportunities to meet drivers. There also will be chances to qualify for a drive down the zMAX Dragway and for a NASCAR Racing ride-along. You can also score photo opportunities and test a Bandolero or Legends car.

Relax in the grandstand or pay $2 for a guided tour that takes you to the VIP suite area, Charlotte Motor Speedway Press Box, and members-only Speedway Club and Clubhouse. A special area for kids, called Powerade PlayZone, will sport bounce houses, a fire truck, face painters, petting zoo, pony rides and appearances by LugNut, the "world's fastest mascot."

This is the second year for the event (first called Charlotte SpeedFest). Last year's festivities drew more than 7,500 fans. Other activities for 2012's event include:

- **An interactive display by Discovery Place**
- **NASCAR Hall of Fame display**
- **US Legends driver "Meet & Greet"**
- **Displays and "Meet & Greet" with the U.S. Lawn Mower Racing Association**
- **Appearances by Miss Sprint Cup**
- **Discounts and samples from local business vendors**
- **Special ticket offers for purchases of speedway events**
- **Food concessions, including Bojangles and Brusters ice cream**

Driving directions: Charlotte Motor Speedway is in Concord, 12 miles north of downtown Charlotte on Highway 29. From I-85, you take Exit 49.

—Karen Olson House

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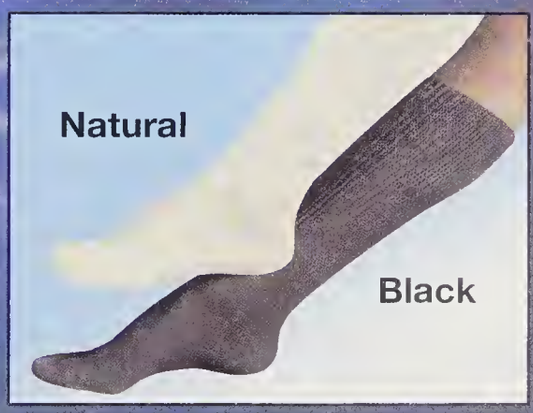

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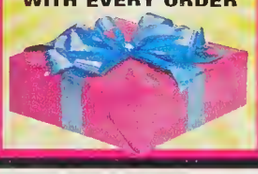

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By Arnie Katz

Will storm doors reduce energy consumption?

Q: My father-in-law has been urging me to install storm doors on the house. He swears they will pay for themselves in energy savings. Is this really worth it?

A: Back in the day, installing storm doors was often recommended as a big energy saver. I installed a bunch of them. Then we started actually measuring things. I remember a project where we installed storm doors in a neighborhood and tracked the energy bills. Much to our surprise, in many of the homes with the new storm doors, the bills actually went up. As we drove down there to try to figure out what was going on, it became clear from the street: a lot of folks had the main door open, letting the sunshine stream in through the new storm door.

Letting more light into the house can have many benefits, but in this case, saving energy wasn't one of them. So, is it likely to make sense in your house? Here are a few things to consider:

1 What's the condition of your existing doors? If they are in really bad shape and very drafty, it would probably make more sense to replace the old door, particularly with an insulated door. In many cases, basic maintenance by replacing weather stripping and bottom sweeps may be more effective than a storm door.

2 How much sun does the door get? Putting a tight-fitting glass door over a door that gets more than a couple of hours of direct sun can have unintended consequences. If the primary door is wood, the heat build-up can deteriorate the paint or other finish very quickly. If it's metal, you can create a serious scald hazard, particularly for small children touching the door.

If the door is not in direct sun, a storm door can help protect it from the effects of weather and actually reduce necessary maintenance.

A well made, properly installed storm door can reduce energy use a bit, but it's very low on the list of things to do in most houses. Low-cost storm doors, on the other hand, tend to get caddywampus after a short time (yes, that's a technical term) and let a lot of outside air in around them. It's not worth it to get a cheap one.

Storm doors that double as screen doors in the warm season can sometimes save a few bucks by helping create cross ventilation and reduce the need to run the air conditioning, particularly in the spring and fall. Putting off using the AC for even a few weeks a year can reduce your bills, as long as you train the children (of whatever age) not to leave the main door open when the AC is on. And if the outdoor humidity is high, those cooling breezes will bring a lot of moisture into the house and make you uncomfortable (and turn your shoes green).

There are some good reasons to install storm doors, but reducing energy bills is rarely one of them.

So what's the bottom line? Thank your father-in-law for his concern and appreciate the fact that he's trying to look out for you. Then show him you heard his concern by investing in some things that are more likely to save you money, like sealing your ducts, sealing between the house and the attic or getting a high efficiency water heater when it's time to replace your old one. There are some good reasons to install storm doors, but reducing energy bills is rarely one of them.

Arnie Katz is director of training and senior building science consultant at Advanced Energy in Raleigh (www.advancedenergy.org). Send your home energy questions to editor@carolinacountry.com

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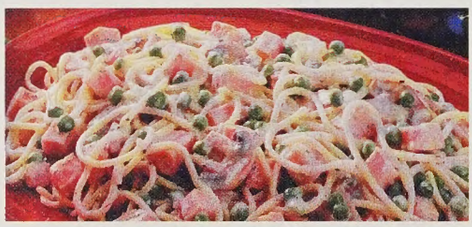
Pretzel Fruit Pizza

- 3 cups finely crushed pretzels
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1¼ cups cold butter
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 1 tablespoon grated lime peel
- 1½ cups whipped topping
- 7–8 cups assorted fresh fruit

In a large bowl, combine pretzels and sugar. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press into a 14-inch pizza pan.

Bake at 375 degrees for 8–10 minutes or until set. Cool on a wire rack; refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine milk, lime juice and peel. Fold in whipped topping; spread over crust. Cover and chill. Top with fruit just before serving.



Pretty Ham Primavera

- ½ pound sliced fresh mushrooms
- ⅓ cup chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups milk
- 1 package (7 ounces) thin spaghetti, cooked and drained
- 2 cups cubed fully cooked ham
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, thawed
- Grated Parmesan cheese, optional

In a large skillet, sauté the mushrooms and onion in oil until tender. Stir in the flour, Italian seasoning, bouillon, salt and pepper until smooth.

Gradually add milk, stirring constantly. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the spaghetti, ham and peas; heat through. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese if desired.

Yield: 4 servings.

From Your Kitchen

Coconut Cake

- 1 box (18.5 ounces) Butter Recipe Cake Mix (I prefer Duncan Hines Moist Deluxe Butter Recipe Cake Mix)
- 1 box (3.9 ounces) vanilla instant pudding
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup oil
- ¾ cup coconut milk
- 4 large eggs
- 8 ounces sour cream

Frosting

- 1 pound cream cheese, at room temperature
- ½ pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- 1 pound confectioner's sugar, sifted
- 6 ounces sweetened shredded coconut, toasted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease and flour two 8- or 9-inch round cake pans. I recommend lining the bottom of your cake pan with parchment paper. It makes it easier to remove from the pan.

Combine cake mix, instant pudding and sugar in mixing bowl. Mix with a whisk to remove any lumps. Add the next 4 ingredients and with a hand-held or standing mixer on medium low; mix until combined. Scrape down sides and bottom of mixing bowl with a spatula to make sure all dry ingredients are incorporated. Continue to mix on medium-high for about 2 minutes. Divide batter evenly in your two cakes pans.

Bake at 350 degrees for 45–50 minutes or until cake is a nice golden brown and you can insert a toothpick or cake tester and it comes out clean. Remove from oven and allow to cool for 10–15 minutes on a wire cooling rack, then remove cakes from pan, remove parchment paper and allow to completely cool on a wire cooling rack. I usually make the cake the night before and wrap in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator overnight. I find that cold cakes are easier to frost and you end up with fewer crumbs in your frosting.

Frosting

In an electric mixer or with a hand-held mixer on medium-high, cream the cream cheese, butter, sugar, vanilla and almond extract until it is light and fluffy. Reduce the speed to medium-low and slowly add the confectioner's sugar and mix until smooth. Spread shredded coconut on a baking sheet and place in 350-degree oven for about 5 minutes. Coconut toasts quickly, so keep a close eye on it until it reaches a light golden color.

Assembling the cake

If your cakes are domed on the tops, take a serrated knife and cut tops flat. Place first layer on cake plate and frost the top only. Place second layer on top of the first and frost the cake starting with the top, then the sides. Once cake is frosted, allow to chill in the refrigerator for about 15-20 minutes. Once chilled, you can cover just the top or the top and sides with the toasted coconut.

Option: *For a cute Easter cake, you can skip the toasted coconut and use a drop or two of green food color to make the shredded coconut "grass" green. Cover top and sides of cake with "grass" and decorate with jelly beans or Easter decorations.*

This recipe comes from Benjamin Butler of Durham.

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Blockbuster@Home (1 disc at a time): Only available with new qualifying DISH Network service activated between 2/01/12 and 5/20/12. For the first 3 months of your subscription, you receive a bundle of Blockbuster@Home for $5/mo (regularly $10/mo) and your programming package at a promotional bundle price. Promotional prices continue for 3 months provided you subscribe to both components of the bundle and do not downgrade. After 3 months, then-current prices apply to each component (unless a separate promotional price still applies to your programming package). Requires online DISH Network account for discs by mail; broadband Internet to stream content; HD DVR to stream to TV. Exchange online rentals for free in-store movie rentals at participating Blockbuster stores. Offer not available in Puerto Rico or U.S. Virgin Islands. Streaming to TV and some channels not available with select packages. Digital Home Advantage plan requires 24-month agreement and credit qualification. Cancellation fee of $17.50/month remaining applies if service is terminated before end of agreement. Online Bonus credit requires online redemption no later than 45 days from service activation. After applicable promotional period, then-current price will apply. $10/mo HD add-on fee waived for life of current account; requires 24-month agreement, continuous enrollment in AutoPay with Paperless Billing. 3-month premium movie offer value is up to $132; after 3 months then-current price applicable unless you downgrade. Free Standard Professional installation only. All equipment is leased and must be returned to DISH Network upon cancellation or unreturned equipment fees apply. Limit 6 leased tuners per account; upfront and monthly fees may apply based on type and number of receivers. HD programming requires HD television. Prices, packages, programming and offers subject to change without notice. Offer available for new and qualified former customers, and subject to terms of applicable Promotional and Residential Customer agreements. Additional restrictions may apply. Offer ends 5/20/12. HBO®, Cinemax® and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc. SHOWTIME and related marks are registered trademarks of Showtime Networks Inc., a CBS Company. STARZ and related channels and service marks are property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. $25 Visa® gift card requires activation and $2.95 shipping and handling fee. You will receive a claim voucher within 3-4 weeks and the voucher must be returned within 30 days. Your Visa® gift card will arrive in approximately 6-8 weeks. InfinityDISH charges a one-time $49.95 non-refundable processing fee. Indiana C.P.D. Reg. No. T.S. 10-1006. *Certain restrictions apply. Based on the availability in your area.

Now you can have affordable life insurance to help your family cover final expenses.

- ✓ **Protection up to $35,000***
- ✓ **Eligible up to age 85**
- ✓ **No physical exam required, based on coverage**
- ✓ **Most health conditions accepted**
- ✓ **No waiting period**
- ✓ **Proceeds immediately available at death of insured**
- ✓ **Company cannot cancel your plan, reduce your benefits or raise your premium**

Whole Life Insurance Policy 4-790(92) underwritten by Standard Life and Casualty Insurance Co is not affiliated with or endorsed by any government agency.

*Selected maximums apply depending on age.

Sample Monthly Rates per $1,000 Coverage‡

‡does not include $36 policy fee; minimums may apply

Issue Age	Male		Female	
	(non-tobacco)	*(tobacco)*	*(non-tobacco)*	*(tobacco)*
35	$1.30	$1.79	$1.08	$1.49
55	$3.20	$4.30	$2.53	$3.55
65	$5.36	$7.18	$4.14	$5.41
75	$10.23	$13.24	$7.64	$8.85
85	$19.77	$26.26	$16.52	$17.67

ACT NOW!

Mail coupon to: Peace of Mind
8358 Six Forks Road, Suite 201
Raleigh, NC 27615

☐ Yes, I would like to know more about Peace of Mind life insurance.

☐ Please include information about your low-cost Medicare Supplement Plans.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth _____

Telephone _____

CC 03/12

To learn more about this affordable life insurance plan simply fill out and mail in this coupon – without obligation.